

Minnesota adult smoking ranking drops from 7th best to 11th

Written by
Friday, 01 February 2013 14:26

A new Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report released Friday shows Minnesota as ranking 11th best among all states for adult smoking. The last time the CDC compared states in 2009, Minnesota was in the top ten with a rank of 7th lowest or best.

"This report shows that far too many Minnesotans are still using tobacco products, 11th isn't good enough for Minnesota," said Commissioner of Health Dr. Edward Ehlinger. "The cost of tobacco in terms of lives and about \$2.87 billion in annual medical costs is too high. We must reduce this toll on our families and our state and one of the most effective ways to curb youth smoking is to raise the price."

In order to decrease cigarette use, Governor Mark Dayton has proposed a 94 cents-a-pack tax increase, which would bring Minnesota's cigarette tax on a par with Wisconsin. Currently, Minnesota's cigarette excise tax ranks 28th among the states.

Some of the projected health benefits of 94 cents tax increase include an 11 percent decrease in youth smoking. It is also estimated that 25,800 kids would be kept from smoking, 19,300 adult smokers would quit, and 13,700 would be saved from premature death.

"The fact that Minnesota has dropped out of the top 10 on this list and that we got a failing grade from the American Lung Association this month highlights that we need to do more to prevent smoking tobacco use among youths and to help adults quit," said Ehlinger, referring to the State of Tobacco Control 2013 Report released January 16, 2013.

Tobacco use continues to be the leading cause of preventable death and disease in Minnesota and the United States. Cigarette smoking was responsible for the premature death of an estimated 5,135 Minnesotans in 2007, about one in every seven deaths in the state. In addition, secondhand smoke is responsible for \$215.7 million in excess medical costs in Minnesota, and more than 66,000 individuals suffering from diseases caused by secondhand smoke.

The CDC report further states that:

- 19 percent of Minnesota adults smoke.
- In 2008-2009, of all Minnesota youth ages 12-17 who had never smoked, 5.4 percent smoked a cigarette for the first time in the past year. This ranked 13th in the nation.
- In 2009-2010, 79.3 percent of adults in Minnesota thought that smoking should never be allowed in indoor workplaces.
- Smoking disproportionately is affecting American Indians and African-Americans, young adults 18-24, and those with less education.

The report, released today, shows how each of the 50 states and Washington D.C. is faring in implementing proven strategies that reduce tobacco use, such as comprehensive smoke-free policies, hard-hitting media campaigns, higher prices on tobacco products and access to cessation services. The purpose of the highlights report is to provide tobacco control programs

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with valid, reliable, state-specific data about the high-impact, cost-effective strategies they are currently using or could be implementing as well as measures to track their progress.

The CDC's report also confirms that while the nation has made enormous progress in reducing smoking, smoking rates are still too high. 20 percent of adults and 18.1 percent of high school students still smoking and smoking declines have slowed in recent years.

Nationally, each year approximately 443,000 people die from smoking or exposure to secondhand smoke, and another 8.6 million suffer from a serious smoking-related illness.

To get help quitting smoking, call 1-800-354-PLAN or visit <http://www.smokefree.gov/>. To access the State Highlights report, visit

<http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/>

, and for additional state-specific tobacco-related data, visit CDC's State Tobacco Activities Tracking and Evaluation System at

<http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/statesystem>.

Also, visit www.BeTobaccoFree.gov for information on quitting and preventing children from using tobacco.

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