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Oregon tobacco use drops to lowest level in recent years

Portland – The Oregon Tobacco Prevention and Education Program (TPEP) has released a new report that reveals Oregonians are smoking fewer cigarettes than at any other time in recent years. The data in TPEP's 2009 Tobacco Facts and Laws report show that in the past year, the number of packs of cigarettes consumed per capita dropped from 54.9 to 49.8, or by 5.1 packs.

That is the lowest number since the TPEP program began in 1996, when annual consumption of cigarettes was 92 packs per capita.

The full report can be found at <http://oregon.gov/DHS/ph/tobacco/pubs.shtml>.

"This is encouraging news, especially as the state is dealing with a new strain of seasonal flu," says Dr. Mel Kohn, head of the Public Health Division for Oregon. "Smokers are much more vulnerable to the H1N1 swine flu and all other forms of influenza. The wise investments we have made in tobacco prevention are going to help keep people safer.

"Despite our success, however, 17 percent of Oregonians still use tobacco," Kohn says. "Every day 48 Oregon children smoke their first cigarette. A total of 22 percent of all Oregon deaths are attributable to tobacco use. There is still work to be done to reduce tobacco use and keep Oregonians healthy."

Report Highlights

A success story is the increase in the number of households with a rule prohibiting smoking in the house. Eighty-nine percent of Oregonians say that no one is

allowed to smoke anywhere inside their home. Ninety-two percent say that no one smoked in their home in the past 30 days.

“With the passage of the Smokefree Workplace Law, which prohibits smoking in almost all workplaces in Oregon, the main point of exposure to the toxins in secondhand smoke is in the home,” Kohn says. “This finding shows that Oregonians understand the danger of secondhand smoke and are taking important steps to reduce exposure. Since secondhand smoke is a factor in many children’s illnesses including upper respiratory disease, asthma and SIDS, a rule prohibiting smoking in 89 percent of Oregon households is very good news.”

Also included in the report are data indicating that 80 percent of smokers in Oregon want to quit and 51 percent quit for one day or longer in an attempt to quit. In fiscal 2008, more than 6,200 smokers in Oregon called the Oregon Tobacco Quit Line at 1-800-QUIT-NOW for help to quit. “The Oregon Tobacco Quit Line is an excellent service that TPEP offers to Oregon’s smokers,” Kohn says. “Due to funding considerations, we are able to provide this assistance to only a fraction of the smokers in Oregon who want to quit.”

The Oregon Tobacco Quit Line is an evidence-based telephone coaching program that helps smokers develop a quit plan, identify triggers and refers them to available resources.

Tobacco’s Toll on Oregon

While tobacco use rates have dropped in recent years, tobacco continues to take a tremendous toll on Oregonians.

- Fewer than half a million Oregon adults smoke cigarettes, or 17 percent of the population.
- 111,848 Oregonians use smokeless tobacco.
- 22 percent of all Oregon deaths are attributable to tobacco use.
- Oregonians are three times more likely to die from tobacco-related causes than from alcohol, motor vehicle accidents, firearms and illicit use of drugs combined.
- Tobacco use costs Oregonians more than \$2.2 billion annually in direct medical costs and lost productivity due to early death.

About the Report

Tobacco Facts and Laws, published yearly, is a reference for the most recent data on tobacco in Oregon as well as a compilation of Oregon’s laws and policies governing tobacco. The report uses data from a variety of sources including the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance survey, the Oregon Healthy Teens survey, the Youth Risk

Behavior survey, the Oregon Public School Drug Use survey and vital statistics data for births and deaths.

About TPEP

The Oregon Tobacco Prevention and Education Program works with local health departments, tribes, schools and community organizations to deliver a comprehensive tobacco prevention program to all Oregon residents. These program activities are based on evidence-based strategies to reduce and prevent tobacco use. For more information, visit www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/tobacco/.