

## Andover raises tobacco age to 21-plus; New regulations on sales take effect Feb. 1 - Eagle-Tribune: News

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Posted: Sunday, January 4, 2015 12:12 am

ANDOVER — Young smokers in Andover will soon have to look elsewhere to buy tobacco.

Starting Feb. 1, the legal age to buy cigarettes and other tobacco and nicotine products in town is increasing from 18 to 21.

New regulations approved by the Board of Health will also limit where tobacco can be sold in Andover.

"I think Andover has always been a progressive community as far as public health goes," Health Director Tom Carbone said on Friday. "The idea of looking to raise the minimum age of tobacco purchases is something that is based on statewide trends, and something that will come sooner or later, at least at a state level."

Andover joins more than 30 communities across the state in raising the legal tobacco purchasing age from 18. While some communities such as Newburyport and Watertown have increased the legal age to 19, others like Braintree, Malden, Melrose and Newton have upped the law to 21 in the past year. Lawrence's recent push to restrict tobacco sales to those under 21 takes effect March 1.

In November, David Proler, district manager of VERC Enterprises, which owns two of Andover's 14 tobacco licenses at gas stations on Lowell Street and River Road, argued that raising the legal age to purchase tobacco by three years would have adverse implications for the community.

"This pushes the younger members of our community in different directions," he said. "Individuals who wish to purchase tobacco will find a means to purchase it."

Wanda Vidal, manager of the VERC West Andover and Dunkin' Donuts at the 139 River Road location, agreed.

"This will really hurt business," she said. "Many of our customers who buy tobacco are 18 to 20 years old, and now they'll just go to other towns. They'll just go there to get it."

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