

Lee, Lenox, Stockbridge raise minimum age to buy tobacco

By Barry Kriger

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LEE, Mass. (WWLP) – The new year will bring new rules for buying tobacco products in three Berkshire County towns. The Tri-Town Boards of Health representing Lee, Lenox and Stockbridge voted unanimously Monday night to raise the minimum age to 21.

Town officials have said raising the minimum age to buy tobacco from 18 to 21 will reduce the number of teens who become lifetime smokers.

Smokers told 22News they think teens will get their cigarettes regardless of age-restrictions.

“As kids, we’re not gonna get affected by it,” said 21-year-old Springfield smoker Youseff Manzoor. “But the stores will. They’re not hurting us. They’re hurting the stores.”

Manzoor’s sentiments were echoed by a convenience store clerk on Wilbraham road. Destiny Velasquez is also a smoker.

“We sell most of our tobacco products to people who are 18, because that’s the legal age in Springfield.” Velasquez told 22News, “I think it’s ridiculous because that’s where most of our sales go... to people 18 and up.”

More than 70 Massachusetts cities and towns have raised the minimum age to buy tobacco from 18 to 21 over the last two years, including Holyoke, South Hadley, Greenfield, Amherst, Montague, Leverett and Williamstown.

The minimum goes to 21 in Lee, Lenox and Stockbridge on January 2, 2016.