

NEW JERSEY 101.5

The smoking age goes to 21 in just days -- are NJ retailers ready?

By [Dino Flammia](#)

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The minimum age to purchase cigarettes in New Jersey [jumps from 19 to 21 on Nov. 1](#). While there's bound to be a few bad apples or shops that are truly unaware of the new law, the overwhelming majority of tobacco retailers in the state will not let any underage smokers slip through the cracks.

"We make 46 to 48 cents on a pack of cigarettes. To lose your license over making a sale — it's not worth it," said William Hansen, owner of Village Deli in East Brunswick.

Hansen on Thursday received signage and a tabletop calendar in the mail to remind customers and employees of the major change.

A statement from New Jersey-based QuickChek said notices have been supplied to their store locations throughout the state, and the required signage will be on display come Wednesday. In addition, their point-of-sale systems have a built-in prompt notifying cashiers to check for ID on any adult product.

New Jersey will become the third state with a minimum age of 21 for tobacco purchases, following the lead of California and Hawaii.

According to Sal Risalvato, executive director of the New Jersey Gasoline, C-Store and Automotive Association, there will be some stores throughout the Garden State that "aren't going to have a clue" about the hike in the minimum age.

Association members have been warned of the change more than once, but Risalvato said there's still the fear of random cases in which a worker, out of habit, mistakenly checks for the old minimum age when looking over an ID.

"It's up to my members to make sure that does not happen," Risalvato said.

With the change, 19- and 20-year-old smokers in New Jersey are permitted to purchase cigarettes and e-cigarettes for only a few more days. Risalvato said he doesn't believe these individuals are "stocking up" on cigarettes, mainly because someone else can simply buy the products for them, or they can be found online.

The minimum age hike, according to Risalvato, will not stop a 19- or 20-year-old from smoking.