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## **UDOH Files Emergency Rule to Address Vaping-related Illnesses**

(Salt Lake City, Utah) – The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) today announced it has implemented a new, emergency administrative rule aimed at reducing the number of vaping-related lung injury cases. The rule requires all tobacco retailers that sell e-cigarette products to post notices regarding the dangers of vaping unregulated THC products, and also restricts the sale of flavored e-cigarette products to retail tobacco specialty businesses.

Retail tobacco specialty businesses are permitted and inspected by local health departments; they are age-restricted retailers that primarily sell e-cigarettes and other tobacco products. Other retailers that sell tobacco products are defined as general tobacco retailers. General tobacco retailers will no longer be allowed to sell flavored e-cigarette products, but may continue to sell non-flavored e-cigarette products.

Utah has been hit especially hard in the national outbreak of lung injury cases, with 71 cases of vaping-related lung injuries being reported as of this week, and another 10 potential cases are under review. Forty-five of these individuals had to be hospitalized, and 26 of them spent time in the intensive care unit.

“Mounting evidence points to the vaping of unregulated THC products as a possible reason for this outbreak,” said Dr. Joseph Miner, executive director of the UDOH.

“Youth and young adults have been hit especially hard. We know many young people who vape THC initially vape nicotine, especially flavored nicotine. Moving these products to age-restricted specialty shops will restrict young people’s access to them and can reduce the number of users who eventually move on to vaping THC.”

Ninety-four percent of Utah cases self-reported vaping THC products, and 64 percent self-reported vaping nicotine. Of those who reported vaping nicotine, most purchased their products at Utah vape shops or convenience stores.

“One of our only tools for addressing this outbreak right now is communication. And being able to communicate directly with individuals who are most at risk of developing lung injuries is a top priority,” said Ryan Bartlett of the UDOH Tobacco Prevention and Control Program.

Retailers will have until October 7 to comply with the emergency rule, which will remain in place for 120 days. The UDOH will work to implement a permanent rule while the emergency rule is in place.

Public health agencies have long warned that the long-term effects of e-cigarette use are unknown, and e-cigarette products have never been proven safe for consumption or effective for quitting smoking.

For more information on the vaping-related lung injury outbreak in Utah visit <https://health.utah.gov/lung-disease-investigation>. To read the emergency administrative rule <https://health.utah.gov/wp-content/uploads/R384-418.pdf>

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*The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.*