



Public Health

County of Santa Cruz

HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

POST OFFICE BOX 962, 1080 Emeline Ave., SANTA CRUZ, CA 95061-0962

TELEPHONE: (831) 454-4000 FAX: (831) 454-4488 TDD: Call 711

Press Release

For Release: Immediately

Contact: Corinne Hyland

Date: February 8, 2023

Phone: (831) 566-4370

Santa Cruz Shows Leadership in Annual Tobacco Control Grades

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY – The American Lung Association (ALA) has released its annual [State of Tobacco Control 2023 California Local Grades](#). Each of the five Santa Cruz County jurisdictions earned an overall grade of an A or B, ranking highly among the 482 incorporated cities and 58 counties in California.

“These grades reflect true leadership on tobacco-related issues by our local policy makers,” said Santa Cruz County Tobacco Education Coalition Co-chair, Rachel Kippen. “A powerful example is the 2023 state-wide ban on the sale of flavored tobacco products. Our local jurisdictions began passing flavor bans in 2018, showing there was public demand for such restrictions and paving the way for state-wide action.”

The report grades jurisdictions on smokefree outdoor air, smokefree housing, restrictions on the sale of tobacco products, and other tobacco-related metrics. The purpose is to increase public knowledge of local laws that help protect residents from the deadly toll of tobacco, and to encourage local leadership where improvement is needed. According to public health officials, there is still important work to be done.

“Tobacco continues to be the number one cause of preventable death in California and studies have associated tobacco use with a higher risk of complications from COVID-19,” said Tara Leonard of the Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency. “As our local jurisdictions build more affordable housing, the importance of smokefree multi-unit housing comes into focus. Toxic tobacco product waste, like cigarette butts, is also a growing concern of local residents and environmental advocates.”

“This year’s grades are definitely worth celebrating,” Kippen added. “But keep in mind that fewer than ten percent of California residents smoke. Yet one hundred percent of us are forced to live with tobacco waste, secondhand smoke, and other harmful impacts of Big Tobacco’s deadly products. I look forward to working with our local policy makers as they continue to lead this important public health fight.”

For more information, please visit <https://www.lung.org/research/sotc>.

###