



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**NEW AWARENESS CAMPAIGN AIMS TO SLASH TOBACCO  
SALES TO MINORS**

***TOP COPS AND HEALTH LEADERS TEAM UP FOR POWERFUL NEW INITIATIVE TO AID  
RETAILERS, REVERSE TROUBLING TREND***

**April 26, 2005 (RALEIGH, N.C.)** – Three of the state’s leading public health agencies, along with retailers around North Carolina, will “raise the red flag” on tobacco sales to minors by unveiling a dynamic, new awareness campaign today in Raleigh.

The Division of Alcohol Law Enforcement (ALE), the Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services and the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF) have joined together for the **Red Flag campaign**.

The campaign is designed to prompt retailers to check for a red border around the photo on N.C. drivers’ licenses every time someone request tobacco products. In N.C., a red border means the customer is under 18 and prohibited from purchasing alcohol and tobacco products. As the campaign slogan puts it: **If you see red, the tobacco sale is dead.**

“Retail clerks are the front line in protecting our children from the dangers of tobacco products,” said Lt. Governor Beverly Perdue, HWTF chair. “Research shows that 90 percent of adult smokers in North Carolina began using cigarettes before the age of 18. The Red Flag campaign will help prevent young people from having access to tobacco, and that will save lives, as well as money.”

The campaign will roll out over a three-year period, focusing each year on three different targeted ALE districts. Year one, 2005, will target districts that had some of the highest rates of tobacco sales to minors based on research conducted by the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Public Health. The campaign will provide educational materials to all retail outlets in the selected districts.

Counties included in year one of the Red Flag campaign are:

**ALE District 1:** Beaufort, Bertie, Camden, Chowan, Currituck, Dare, Edgecombe, Gates, Halifax, Hertford, Hyde, Martin, Northampton, Pasquotank, Perquimans, Tyrrell, and Washington

**ALE District 8:** Cabarrus, Gaston, Mecklenburg, Rowan, Stanly, and Union

**ALE District 9:** Avery, Buncombe, Cherokee, Clay, Cleveland, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga and Yancey

“The Red Flag campaign is not creating a new system to enforce; it’s simply and clearly reinforcing our existing prohibitions on selling tobacco to minors. We worked *with* the retail community to develop awareness materials that are easy to use and will make a difference,” said Michael Robertson, ALE director.

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Red Flag also has a component that allows leaders in the retail community to voice their support for the campaign. Members of the "Retailers for Red Flag" program have pledged to work to generate awareness of the campaign's mission among store managers and clerks. Retailers for Red Flag members include the NC Retail Merchants Association (NCRMA), the NC Association of Convenience Stores (NCACS), Food Lion, and Lowes Foods and all formally endorse the initiative.

### **ABOUT THE ALCOHOL LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVISION'S OF TOBACCO EDUCATION AND ENFORCEMENT**

The Alcohol Law Enforcement Division's Tobacco Education and Enforcement program is conducted in partnership with the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services and the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund. It is also a cooperative effort among community agencies, local law enforcement agencies, merchants, parents and teens. ALE, a division of the Department of Crime Control and Public Safety, has 76 agents throughout North Carolina who enforce alcohol and tobacco laws.

### **ABOUT THE NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is responsible for ensuring the health, safety and well being of all North Carolinians, providing the human service needs for fragile populations like the mentally ill, deaf, blind and developmentally disabled, and helping poor North Carolinians achieve economic independence. The agency touches the lives of virtually every North Carolinian from birth to old age – prenatal programs, child development programs, and rest home regulations are all part of DHHS charge.

### **ABOUT THE NC HEALTH AND WELLNESS TRUST FUND**

The NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund makes North Carolina stronger, both physically and economically, by funding programs that promote preventive health. Created by the General Assembly in 2000 to allocate a portion of North Carolina's share of the national tobacco settlement, HWTF has invested \$127 million to support preventive health initiatives and \$78 million to fund a prescription drug assistance program. For more information, please visit [www.hwtfc.org](http://www.hwtfc.org).

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