



CDTFA
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF
TAX AND FEE ADMINISTRATION

Things Retailers Should Know Before Buying **CIGARETTES AND TOBACCO PRODUCTS**



Questions and Answers

Before Retailers Buy Cigarettes and Tobacco Products Online or From an Unlicensed Supplier

Q: I am a cigarette and tobacco products retailer, and I found a great price for some cigarettes and tobacco products advertised for sale by a company online. Can I purchase these products for resale in my store?

A: It depends. In California, you, as a licensed retailer, may only purchase cigarettes affixed with a California tax stamp or purchase tax-paid tobacco products from a distributor or wholesaler who is licensed with us to sell cigarettes and tobacco products. This is true whether you purchase these products online or by mail. You are responsible for verifying if your supplier has a valid cigarette and tobacco products distributor or wholesaler license with us by visiting our website at www.cdtfa.ca.gov/taxes-and-fees/cigarette-licensees.htm. For retailer's purchase invoice requirements, please refer to our *Tax Guide for Cigarettes and Tobacco Products* at www.cdtfa.ca.gov/taxes-and-fees/cigarette-and-tobacco-products/.

In addition, you may purchase and sell only cigarettes and roll-your-own tobacco authorized for sale in California as listed on the Office of the Attorney General's California Tobacco Directory at www.oag.ca.gov/tobaccoldirectory.

Furthermore, you may not purchase, possess, store, own, or sell flavored cigarettes, flavored tobacco products, or tobacco product flavor enhancers.

Q: I checked your website and found out the seller does not have a distributor or wholesaler license with California. No wonder the price is so low! Can I still purchase cigarettes and tobacco products from them?

A: It depends. As a California-licensed cigarette and tobacco products retailer, you may not purchase cigarettes or tobacco products for your retail store from an unlicensed wholesaler, distributor, or any other person. Only a California-licensed cigarette and tobacco products distributor may purchase cigarettes or tobacco products from an unlicensed supplier who is not required to have a cigarette and tobacco products license with us.

The excise tax on cigarettes and tobacco products is paid by a distributor upon the distribution of cigarettes and tobacco products in California. A distribution includes the [sale](#), [use](#), or [consumption](#) of [untaxed cigarettes](#) or [untaxed tobacco products](#) in California and the placing of untaxed cigarettes or untaxed tobacco products into a vending machine or retail stock in California.

For more information about cigarette and tobacco products distributors, refer to the *Distributors* section of our *Tax Guide for Cigarettes and Tobacco Products* at www.cdtfa.ca.gov/taxes-and-fees/cigarette-and-tobacco-products/.



Protect Yourself!

The Following Publications and Resources Are Available for Retailers:

- [Publication 63](#), *Cigarette Distributor Licensing and Tax Stamp Guide*
- [Publication 78](#), *Sales of Cigarettes and Tobacco Products in California—License Requirements for Retailers*
- [Publication 93](#), *Cigarette and Tobacco Products Taxes*
- [Publication 152](#), *Cigarette and Tobacco Product Inspections*
- [Publication 161](#), *Criminal Citations Include a Civil Administrative Process*
- [Publication 403](#), *California's Counterfeit-Resistant Cigarette Tax Stamp*
- *What to Know about Your Cigarette and Tobacco Products Inspection* video at www.youtube.com/watch?v=2k6Dgtdxo8Q
- *Tax Guide for Cigarettes and Tobacco Products* at www.cdtfa.ca.gov/taxes-and-fees/cigarette-and-tobacco-products/
- *Tax Guide for California Electronic Cigarette Excise Tax* at www.cdtfa.ca.gov/taxes-and-fees/california-electronic-cigarette-excise-tax/
- Office of the Attorney General's California Tobacco Directory at www.oag.ca.gov/tobaccodirectory
- Verify a distributor or wholesaler license at www.cdtfa.ca.gov/taxes-and-fees/cigarette-licensees.htm.
- Sign up for our updates at www.cdtfa.ca.gov/subscribe/.
- Sign up for cigarette and tobacco education events at www.cdtfa.ca.gov/seminar/#events.

For More Information

Please call our Customer Service Center at 1-800-400-7115 (TTY:711) and select the option for *Special Taxes and Fees*. Customer service representatives are available Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (Pacific time), except state holidays.