



Joel Santi shops at Cignot, which caters to electronic cigarette smokers, on Nov. 13 in Elmhurst, Ill. CHUCK BERMAN/CHICAGO TRIBUNE/MCT

# Regulation Push Catching Up With Electronic Cigarettes

BY JOHN KEILMAN AND MITCH SMITH

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CHICAGO — Jay Altman smoked cigarettes for 25 years before deciding a few months ago that for the sake of his wallet and his health, a change was in order.

But Altman didn't quit — he switched.

The North Side insurance worker swapped his daily pack and a half of smokes for the vanilla-flavored nicotine aerosol of an electronic cigarette. He feels better these days, he said, and not just because he's saving more than \$100 a week.

"My friends have noticed a difference," Altman said while sampling assorted flavors at Smoque Vapours, an e-cigarette shop in the Loop. "They'll say, 'You smell good,' instead of, 'You stink.'"

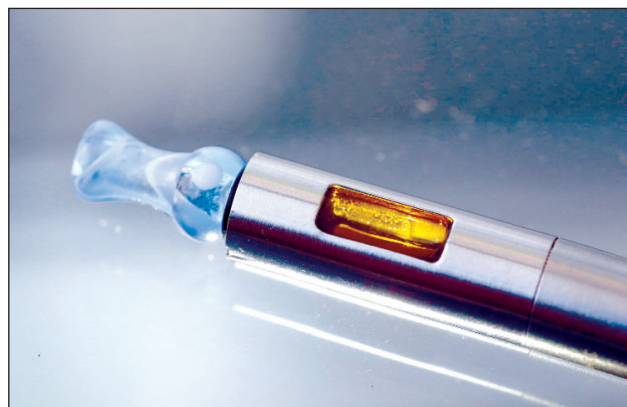
The fast-growing e-cigarette industry has hitched its future to such testimonials, pitching its product as a safer and cheaper alternative to tobacco cigarettes. So far, the business has escaped the reach of regulators, but from Washington, D.C., to the Chicago suburbs, that is changing quickly.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration appears poised to label e-cigarettes a "tobacco product," a distinction that would give the agency power over their marketing, manufacture and sale. Mundelein, Ill., about 35 miles northwest of Chicago, just passed an ordinance banning the sale of e-cigarettes to anyone under the age of 18, and on Jan. 1, a similar law will take effect statewide.

Evanston, meanwhile, has gone even further, banning the use of e-cigarettes anywhere smoking is prohibited.

"There hasn't been a whole lot of long-term research on this, but we really wanted to make sure we were on the front end to protect our residents," said Carl Caneva, assistant director of Evanston's health department.

The lack of regulation has turned e-cigarettes into a commercial Wild West, where basement chemists and giant corporations alike concoct mixtures that taste like everything from peach schnapps to Mountain Dew. The novel flavors concern anti-smoking advocates, who note that teen e-cigarette use recently doubled within a single year.



The nicotine liquid is shown in an electronic cigarette at Cignot, which caters to e-cigarette smokers. CHUCK BERMAN/CHICAGO TRIBUNE/MCT

"I don't think that there's any question that flavors appeal to young people," said Danny McGoldrick of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. "It's just another way to help introduce them to the habit."

Researchers aren't sure of all the chemicals released by the products, but some say there's ample reason for worry. The American Lung Association, which favors strict regulation, cites a recent study that found chemicals such as formaldehyde and acetone in exhaled e-cigarette vapor.

"We're very concerned because we don't know what's in e-cigarettes or what the health consequences of them might be," said Erika Sward, the lung association's assistant vice president for national advocacy. "Frankly, until the FDA begins its oversight of these products, I think everyone needs to proceed very cautiously."

E-cigarettes use tiny atomizers to turn nicotine-infused liquids into an aerosol, which is inhaled by the user. They've been sold in the United States since the mid-2000s, but the Electronic Cigarette Industry Group says sales have boomed in recent years, turning the gadgets into a \$2 billion a year business.

The group's president, Eric Criss, said e-cigarettes are intended to be a safer alternative for people who already smoke.

"We feel very strongly that we not be taxed and regulated as a tobacco product because our goal as an industry is to distinguish ourselves from traditional tobacco cigarettes," he said. "We believe there's a ladder of harm. Cigarettes are at the top of that, and our goal is to get people to move down that ladder."

The science behind that claim is far from settled. The industry points to research — some of it funded by e-cigarette interests — that shows the products to be less risky to users, sometimes called "vapers," and bystanders alike. Robert West, a health psychology professor at University College London, maintains that a global switch from tobacco cigarettes to atomized nicotine would save millions of lives a year.

Stanton Glantz, director of the Center for Tobacco Control Research & Education at the University of California at San Francisco, agreed that e-cigarettes appear to be less harmful than tobacco but said they're hardly risk-free.

He said most smokers don't give up tobacco cigarettes entirely when they use electronic ones, so their health doesn't improve much. And while bystanders aren't exposed to secondhand smoke, he said, initial research shows that they're still inhaling nicotine, an addictive substance, along with toxic chemicals and ultrafine particles that can cause heart problems.

"Just because someone chooses to service their (nicotine) addiction by using an e-cigarette, that still doesn't create a right for them to poison people in the neighborhood," Glantz said.

The FDA says a federal appeals court has given it the power to regulate e-cigarettes as though they are tobacco products. The agency has a proposed regulation in the works, and while officials won't say what it contains, public health advocates and industry representatives expect the FDA to assert its authority over e-cigarettes.

Many states are waiting for that to happen before deciding whether to incorporate e-cigarettes into smoking bans, but Glantz argues that new rules could take years to finalize and aren't necessary for states to tighten their clean air laws.

Three states — North Dakota, New Jersey and Utah — already include e-cigarettes in their smoking bans, and about 100 cities and counties nationwide have taken similar steps, according to the American Nonsmokers' Rights Foundation.

But Melaney Arnold, spokeswoman for the Illinois Department of Public Health, said the research on e-cigarettes' secondhand effects is still too preliminary to act upon.

"It's still evolving, and it will still (take) time until we know the total health effects," she said.

## Climate Chief: Talks Need To Find Answer

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — After another U.N. climate conference gave only modest results, European Climate Commissioner Connie Hedegaard says the process needs to provide a "substantial answer" to global warming in two years to remain relevant.

Even if it succeeds, it's worth reconsidering whether the international confabs need to be held every year, and whether the scope of each session should be narrower, Hedegaard told The Associated Press on Sunday.

"Maybe it would be time now to think if there should be themes for the conferences so that not each conference is about everything," she said in a telephone interview.

In two decades, the U.N. talks have failed to provide a cure to the world's fever. Heat-trapping carbon emissions that scientists say are warming the planet are growing each year as most countries still depend on coal and oil to fuel their economies.

Besides those emissions, the U.N. talks deal with a range of complex issues, including monitoring and verification of climate actions, accounting rules, and helping developing countries cope with sea level rise, desertification and other climate impacts as they transition to clean energy.

The two-week session that ended Saturday in Warsaw nearly collapsed in overtime before agreements were watered down to a point where no country was promising anything concrete.

On the final day, sleep-deprived delegates spent hours wrangling over the wording of paragraphs and bickering over procedure, like when Venezuela questioned why the U.S. got to speak before Fiji in the plenary.

As the gavel dropped, negotiators emerged with a vague road map on how to prepare for a global climate pact they're supposed to adopt in two years — work Hedegaard said will be crucial in answering whether the world still needs the U.N. process.

## U.S. Gas Prices Up Average Of 3 Cents

CAMARILLO, Calif. (AP) — After nine weeks of falling gas prices, the average U.S. price of a gallon of gasoline is up 3 cents over the past two weeks.

The Lundberg Survey of fuel prices released Sunday says the price of a gallon of regular is \$3.25. Midgrade costs an average of \$3.44 a gallon, and premium is \$3.59.

Industry analyst Trilby Lundberg said it's the first price hike since Sept. 6.

Of the cities surveyed in the Lower 48 states, the highest average, \$3.58 a gallon, was found in San Diego. The lowest, \$2.93, was in Tulsa, Okla.

## Comet's Fate To Be Determined Thurs.

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — For months, all eyes in the sky have pointed at the comet that's zooming toward a blisteringly close encounter with the sun.

The moment of truth comes Thursday — Thanksgiving Day.

The sun-grazing Comet ISON, now thought to be less than a mile wide, will either fry and shatter, victim of the sun's incredible power, or endure and quite possibly put on one fabulous celestial show.

Talk about an astronomical cliffhanger.

Even the smartest scientists are reluctant to lay odds. Should it survive, ISON would be visible with the naked eye through December, at least from the Northern Hemisphere. Discernible at times in November with ordinary binoculars and occasionally even just the naked eye, it already has dazzled observers and is considered the most scrutinized comet ever by NASA. But the best is, potentially, yet to come.

Detected just over a year ago, the comet is passing through the inner solar system for the first time. Still fresh, this comet is thought to bear the pristine matter of the beginning of our solar system.

It's believed to be straight from the Oort cloud on the fringes of the solar system, home to countless icy bodies, most notably the frozen balls of dust and gas in orbit around the sun known as comets. For whatever reason, ISON was propelled out of this cloud and drawn toward the heart of the solar system by the sun's intense gravitational pull.



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