

Cigarette and Tobacco Products Licensing

The Board of Equalization (BOE) administers the Cigarette and Tobacco Licensing Act Law (Act). The law requires that all sellers in the distribution chain obtain and annually renew a license to sell cigarettes and tobacco products. This licensing obligation is specific to sales of cigarettes and tobacco products and is in addition to any other license or permit that may be required at the local or state level.

The Act includes the following Business and Professions Code provision, which gives BOE the authority to provide licensee information, at no charge, to certain state and local authorities, when used for specific purposes:

“22973.2. **License database; access.** The board shall, upon request, provide to the State Department of Health Services, the office of the Attorney General, a law enforcement agency, and any agency authorized to enforce local tobacco control ordinances, access to the board’s database of licenses issued to retailers within the jurisdiction of that agency or law enforcement agency. The agencies authorized by this section to access the board’s database shall only access and use the board’s database for purposes of enforcing tobacco control laws and shall adhere to all state laws, policies, and regulations pertaining to the protection of personal information and individual privacy. “

There are similar provisions authorizing BOE to provide information on other cigarette and tobacco product licensees such as distributors, wholesalers, importers and manufacturers, in addition to retailers. Requests should include the type(s) of licensee information desired (retailer, distributor, etc.) and the geographic location(s) for which the request is being made (specific city or cities, county or state-wide).

Licensee information is available to the public for a nominal charge. However, if the request is being made pursuant to the referenced statute, please identify your agency and indicate how the data will be used, for a waiver of the fees. Requests that meet the statutory requirements are generally processed within one business day and can be forwarded to the recipient via email or the data placed onto a CD and mailed. All other requests are processed upon receipt of payment and sent through regular mail.

Each record provided will contain the following fields:

License number, business name, location/address, city, state, and zip code. Ownership information is also provided, however certain restrictions apply to disclosure of the names of individuals, husband & wife co-owners and domestic partnerships when this data is provided to the general public.

You may submit your requests for licensee information electronically to the BOE at the following e-mail address:

PSTD-.STFD-PPABDataRequests@boe.ca.gov

If you need additional information or have any questions, contact the Program Policy and Administration Branch at 1-916-323-0206.