



**SMOKE
FREE
MOVIES**

SmokeFreeMovies.ucsf.edu



SOLUTIONS

The Smoke Free Movies campaign has proposed four measures to make sure that the U.S. film industry is not acting as a marketing arm of the tobacco industry. None involves censorship. All have been endorsed by the World Health Organization, the American Medical Association, the American Heart Association, and the U.S. Public Interest Research Group.

Certify no pay-offs

Given Big Tobacco's well-documented history of secret product placement—and the upsurge of smoking in movies—public confidence could be restored if every new smoking movie ran the following affidavit in its closing credits: “No person or entity involved in this motion picture accepted anything from any tobacco company, its agents or fronts.”

In 1990, Big Tobacco changed its own voluntary promotional policies to bar paid brand placement. In 1998, in settling Minnesota's lawsuit against the tobacco industry as well as in the Master Settlement Agreement with 46 state Attorneys

General, Big Tobacco again agreed to stop promoting smoking in the movies. Unless Big Tobacco is violating or skirting these agreements, it should be a simple matter for producers to certify that nobody involved in a motion picture benefited in any way—cash, loans, free cigarettes, publicity or anything else—from the appearance of smoking or tobacco images in a film.

**NO PERSON OR ENTITY INVOLVED IN THIS
MOTION PICTURE ACCEPTED ANYTHING FROM ANY
TOBACCO COMPANY, ITS AGENTS OR FRONTS.**

Require anti-smoking ads

All appearances of smoking in a film, unless dramatically associated with illness or death, tend to glamorize it. Whether it is the hero (success) or the villain (rebellion) who smokes does not matter—either one reinforces tobacco advertising themes. Counter-advertising is effective because it interrupts the fantasy aspects of smoking and makes audiences into critical viewers. Exhibitors should run effective anti-tobacco spots before all smoking feature films. Spots should also be added to newly-released videos and DVDs of smoking films, regardless of rating; many teens view R-rated movies through those media.

Stop identifying brands

Any smoking in a movie promotes smoking. But the visual endorsement of specific brands by high-profile stars is even more powerful—and has become more common. Marlboro makes

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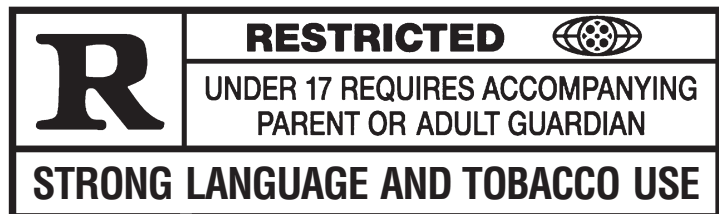
by far the most appearances in top-grossing films. A Philip Morris product, Marlboro is an international brand and the leading brand among teens in the U.S. No matter what creative justification may be offered for on-screen smoking, there is no excuse for brand display and promotion. Given the number of paid product placement and cross-promotional arrangements for brands in other categories (cars, fast foods, and so on) that appear in movies, the display of tobacco brands gives the appearance of violating agreements against paid brand placement for tobacco products, destroying whatever “naturalism” the filmmaker might have sought to achieve.

Rate new smoking movies “R”

Except in the rare instance that an actual historical figure who smoked is being depicted, or the depiction unmistakably reflects the reality of death and suffering caused by tobacco and secondhand smoke, all new movies with smoking and tobacco display should receive an R rating from the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA).

Doing so will reduce the amount of smoking in the movies teens see by over 60%. And, because the effects of smoking in the movies depends on the “dose” kids get, an R rating will prevent 535 kids from starting to smoke every day—and prolong 170 lives as a result.

It will also give producers pause as they consider the box office consequences of including tobacco promotions. With the amount of smoking now in G, PG and PG13 movies, an R rating will also help parents safeguard children against smoking promotion when choosing movies or videos.



The MPAA has in the past resisted proposals to rate smoking movies R, with the rationale that tobacco is a legal product. The MPAA does consider foul language to be a reason to rate a movie R, despite the fact that expletives are legal and, unlike tobacco use, present no health danger to the public. Here is a suggested standard for the MPAA to adopt, modeled on its policy for language:

Even one use of tobacco or presentation of tobacco advertising or similar pro-tobacco imagery must lead the Rating Board to issue a film an R rating. These films can be rated less severely, however, if by a special vote, the Ratings Board feels that the presentation of tobacco clearly and unambiguously reflects the dangers and consequences of tobacco use or accurately represents the smoking behavior of an actual historical figure, so that a lesser rating would more responsibly reflect the opinion of American parents.

For more information

Visit www.smokefreemovies.ucsf.edu. Smoke Free Movies is a project of Stanton Glantz, PhD, at the University of California, San Francisco, with support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund.