

AUG 30 1988
BURELLES

New 'smokeless' cigarettes are headed for store shelves

The New York Times
NEW YORK — The R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co. started distributing its new "smokeless" cigarette Monday in three test markets, including St. Louis, amid attacks by medical groups that want the product banned as a health nostrum.

The new brand, called Premiers, will be advertised as providing "cleaner enjoyment" than other cigarettes, Reynolds executives said. People will be able to buy the cigarettes Oct. 1 in the test markets of St. Louis, Kansas City, Mo., and Tulsa, Okla.

Although the new cigarettes do not produce tar and might reduce a smoker's chances of getting cancer, emphysema and other lung damage, the company is being careful to make no health or safety claims.

"We will not say it is a safer cigarette," said Edward A. Horrigan Jr., chairman and chief executive of Reynolds Tobacco, a subsidiary of R.J.R. Nabisco Inc.

A health claim would invite regulation by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

"If a product is sold with claims like 'smokeless,' A-5, Col. 1

'Smokeless' cigarettes to be sold

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to make cigarettes safer," it is a medical device," said William Grigg, an FDA spokesman, and the agency would not permit it to be sold unless it could be shown that it was therapeutic and beneficial to health.

In comments filed last week with the FDA, Reynolds' lawyers cited court decisions holding that cigarettes were not drugs and thus not subject to FDA review.

The new cigarettes burn without odor and only a trace of ash or smoke that might irritate people nearby, said Richard A. Kampe, president of the Reynolds company development division.

The FDA is considering petitions for regulatory review of Premiers and low-tar cigarettes in general. Frank E. Young, the head of the FDA, discussed the legal and health issues last week with lawyers for Reynolds and representatives of the American Medical Association, the American Cancer Society, the American Lung Association and the American Heart Association.

Smokeless cigarettes are the latest entrant in the tobacco industry's struggle to reverse declining sales and fend off proliferating legal, medical and social assaults on

Worldwide tobacco sales have been rising, and 5 trillion cigarettes were sold last year. But in the United States, unit sales have declined about 1.8 percent a year since 1982, although rising prices have pushed total revenues to \$17 billion, analysts said.

The new product looks and feels like a cigarette. A burning carbon element at the tip warms the tobacco and the flavoring ingredients without burning them, said A. Wallace Hayes, a Reynolds vice president for research.

Only the carbon fuel and one-fourth inch of paper and insulation actually burn. Hayes said smokers inhale a vapor composed mainly of water and glycerol, an odorless and colorless chemical. Carbon monoxide emanates from the burning carbon tip.

Tar generated by conventional cigarettes has been linked to lung cancer and emphysema, and nicotine has been linked to heart attacks, stroke and high blood pressure, according to findings that have been widely accepted by medical and government authorities. Tobacco industry spokesmen reject those findings as unproven.

The Premier package states that the brand contains 0.4 milligrams of nicotine per cigarette. That's more nicotine than some "ultralight" cigarettes, Horrigan said.

"This is the nicotine level that consumers tell us they want," he said.

Ultralight cigarettes with only 0.1 percent or 0.2 percent nicotine are bought by less than 3 percent of the nation's 50 million smokers, Horrigan said.

Reynolds executives said Premiers would cost about 25 percent higher than other cigarettes. That's about 30 cents a pack or \$2.75 a carton higher.

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