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Natural American Spirit Smokers Over 22 Times More Likely to Believe Brand is Less Harmful

New Research Underscores Need for FDA Take Action on Misleading Packaging

Nearly 64 percent of Natural American Spirit smokers inaccurately believe the cigarettes are less harmful, compared to 8.3 percent of smokers of other brands, according to new research released in *Tobacco Control* and conducted by researchers at the Schroeder Institute for Tobacco Research and Policy Studies at Truth Initiative. Smokers of Natural American Spirit cigarettes were over 22 times more likely to believe their brand was less harmful than other cigarette brands.

The new research also finds that compared to smokers of other cigarette brands, the typical Natural American Spirit smoker:

- is younger, age 18-34;
- frequently thinks about the harms of his or her tobacco use;
- has used alcohol and/or marijuana in the past 30 days; and
- is more likely to identify as LGBTQ than smokers of other cigarette brands.

“The majority of Natural American Spirit smokers inaccurately believe that their cigarettes are less harmful than other brands,” said Dr. Jennifer Pearson, Research Investigator at Truth Initiative’s Schroeder Institute for Tobacco Research and Policy Studies and lead author on the study. “These misperceptions may encourage smokers to switch cigarette brands rather than quit smoking entirely, or may increase intent to try the product. Given the brand’s rapid growth and its more common use by youth and LGBTQ individuals, the FDA needs to enforce the law to ensure Santa Fe Natural Tobacco Company and RJ Reynolds can no longer mislead consumers about the safety of their product.”

Natural American Spirit cigarettes are marketed as “natural,” “organic,” and “additive-free.” The brand is produced by Santa Fe Natural Tobacco Company and owned by RJ Reynolds, one of the largest tobacco companies in the country. According to data collected through the National

Survey on Drug Use and Health, use of Natural American Spirit cigarettes grew 554 percent from 2002-2013 among all age groups.

Earlier this year, researchers from Truth Initiative released a [study](#) published in *Nicotine and Tobacco Research* that found descriptors and other aspects of Natural American Spirit cigarette packs lead 50-60 percent of U.S. adults to incorrectly believe that Natural American Spirit cigarettes are less harmful than a comparison cigarette pack.

Together, these studies provide valuable new evidence that Natural American Spirit pack descriptors and other features influence harm perceptions among U.S. adults. In August 2015, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued a warning letter to Santa Fe Natural Tobacco Company determining that their use of “Natural” and “Additive Free” on their product labeling constitutes a reduced harm claim. These claims are prohibited under the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act of 2009 without FDA approval – which has never been given. There has been no public action taken by the FDA since the warning letter was issued.

Last month, Breathe DC filed a lawsuit in the DC Superior Court to hold Santa Fe Natural Tobacco Company accountable for their deceptive marketing of Natural American Spirit cigarettes.