



Weather

Soaked and smoked.
Cloudy, rain likely.
High 56, low 47.
Details, page A-36

The Houston Post

Houston owned, Texas proud



\$1.00

SUNDAY, February 18, 1990

©1990, The Houston Post

★ FINAL EDITION

Officials fume over test cigarette

Report says women are target group

BY MIKE DORNING
OF THE HOUSTON POST STAFF

A tobacco company's reported plan to target a new brand of cigarettes at women entering their childbearing years is "unconscionable," a Houston councilwoman said Saturday, as health officials criticized the marketing campaign that will begin in Houston this spring.

City Council member Eleanor Tinsley, who sponsored the city's ban on smoking at concerts starting this week, said R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co.'s new product will "harm someone's health, and they've chosen a particularly vulnerable group."

Reynolds confirmed Saturday it plans to test-market the cigarette, named Dakota, but said the campaign would be aimed at adults already smoking Marlboros.

"It is intended to appeal to that large group of adults, both male and female, who are currently smoking Marlboro, the largest-selling brand," said James W. Johnston, chairman and chief executive officer.

The Washington Post reported Saturday that a proposed marketing plan prepared for Reynolds by Promotional Marketing Inc. suggests Dakota be positioned to replace Marlboro as the brand of choice among female smokers with limited education and between the ages of 18 and 24.

Dr. Thomas Hyslop, director of the Harris County Health Department, said he was particularly disturbed by reports the cigarette would be test-marketed this April in Houston, and that the campaign would focus on poorly educated

Please see **SMOKE, A-27**

SMOKE: Officials fume over new cigarette test

From A-1

women.

"It's certainly taking advantage of people who may not know of all the dangers of smoking," Hyslop said. "Smoking is one of the main risk factors. It causes not just lung cancer, but many other chronic illnesses."

U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Louis W. Sullivan, reacting to the report, said in a statement: "Smoking is increasingly becoming concentrated among Americans with lower incomes and less education, and this is simply wrong."

"It is especially reprehensible to lure young people into smoking and potential lifelong nicotine addiction. And the risk that smoking specifically poses for women adds yet another tawdry dimension to any cigarette marketing effort which may be aimed at younger women."

Sullivan noted that lung cancer has overtaken breast cancer as the "number one cause of death among women" and said smoking poses special risks for pregnant women.

Women who are 18 to 20 years old represent the only group of Americans whose rate of smoking continues to increase.

Sullivan said he would present more detail about smoking prob-

lems at a hearing Tuesday before the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee.

Dr. Michael Cinciripini, a Galveston researcher on smoking cessation, said the advertising campaign may well recruit more women to the smoking habit, but he added the effect probably would be limited.

The behavior of family and friends is much more likely to encourage someone to smoke than is advertising, he said.

"I couldn't condone targeted advertising, particularly directed at that group, because I don't think they are fully aware of the dangers," said Cinciripini, an associate professor of psychiatry at the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston.

"The effect will probably be limited to people are experimenting with smoking or likely to take up the habit," he said.

The Washington Post said the marketing plan proposed for Dakota targets women whose favorite pastimes include "cruising," "partying" and attending hot rod shows and tractor pulls with their boyfriends.

The newspaper said documents it obtained showed the marketing plan is aimed at young white women with no education beyond high school who were described as "virile females."

The proposed campaign, dubbed "Project V.F." for virile female, described the type of woman targeted as one who watches *Roseanne* and evening soap operas on television, hopes to marry in her early 20s and spends free time "with her boyfriend, doing whatever he is doing," according to the report.

It was not clear whether Reynolds has adopted the marketing strategy proposed to it by Promotional Marketing Inc., the newspaper said.

Johnston said in a statement released by Reynolds that "the Dakota marketing plan is focused on current adult Marlboro smokers — nothing more, nothing less."

"This focus on competitive brands is no different than that of every other cigarette company or indeed any other consumer product company. Different products are designed to appeal to different categories of consumers," he said. "Dakota is no different."

Kathleen Wiebers, executive director of the South Dakota Lung Association, noted that her state has the fifth-lowest smoking rate in the nation, at 21.1 percent of the adult population, according to the federal Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.