

Second-hand Smoke

Second-hand Smoke (ETS): Workplace Policy

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Hasn't smoking been regulated in the workplace for years and years?

Traditionally, smoking was not been allowed in situations that involve working with flammable, or explosive products. In these situations, smoking is not restricted to protect people from the health effects of second-hand smoke but rather to protect them from obvious fire and explosion hazards.

In other situations, smoking has been banned as a measure to prevent hand-to-mouth digestion of chemicals. Food, drink, and cigarettes are frequently contaminated by contact with unwashed hands, gloves or clothing, or by being left exposed in the workplace.

Since the early 1990s, however, health concerns about exposure to second-hand smoke have broadened legislation.

This document will cover issues related to smoking restrictions in the workplace including legal obligations and steps to take when instituting a workplace smoking policy. For general information about second-hand smoke (including e-cigarette vapour) and possible related health effects, please see the OSH Answers document [Second-hand Smoke: General Information and Health Effects](#).

What jurisdictions in Canada have regulated second-hand smoke in the workplace?

All Canadian jurisdictions have a formal law or regulation that restricts smoking and vaping in the workplace.

Regulations are not the same from province to province so it is important to consult with your local authorities. A list of [Canadian governmental occupational health and safety departments](#) is available.

A list of legislation about [smoke free workplaces](#) is available.

Note: You can view the list of legislation for free. Access to the actual legislation requires a subscription.

Generally speaking, what do the regulations say?

All jurisdictions have banned smoking and vaping inside an enclosed building entirely. Smoking is restricted in public buildings (including provincial government offices, including their outdoor property and parking lots) as well as many public places such as restaurants (including outdoor patios), parks, schools and school grounds, and the like. Where smoking is permitted in a specific room or area, these areas must meet certain criteria in terms of the use of the room and ventilation. Outdoor smoking areas must also meet certain criteria, especially in terms of location.

What is an example of a smoking area?

Designated areas may be available inside some workplaces, such as prisons, group homes, or healthcare residences. Requirements often include that the room be:

- clearly identified to the workforce by signs or other effective means
- provided with a separate, non-recirculating exhaust ventilation system
- structurally separated from other work or break areas
- equipped with ashtrays or non-combustible covered receptacles for the disposal of waste

Except in an emergency, an employer should not require a worker to enter an indoor area where smoking is permitted.

If outdoors, the area should not be by the entrances to the building where non-smokers have to pass by to enter the building. It should be a separate area which is away from the building's doorways, air intake ventilation, or windows. A minimum distance of 3 metres or up to 9 metres must be maintained from the door, air intake, or window, depending on the jurisdiction.

Should a company offer a smoking or vaping cessation program?

To help those persons who wish to stop smoking, companies may offer or provide access to cessation programs.

Common elements of smoking or vapour cessation programs include:

- Self-help
- Professional medical advice
- Individual counselling
- Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT)
- Incentives including contests and special events

There are three basic approaches to cessation support the in the workplace. The chart below compares the pros and cons of each approach. To achieve the highest success, all three approaches should be introduced with activities incorporated into a broader wellness initiative.

Approach	Pros	Cons
<p>Comprehensive:</p> <p>Offering programs and activities at the workplace</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More accessible. • More flexible (e.g., can be offered at various times to accommodate shift and other workers). • Sends a strong message of commitment and support from employer. • Demonstrates employer's leadership. • May provide additional motivation. • Can be offered to spouses and family members. • Easy to target hard-to-reach groups. • Supports ex-smokers. • Can provide follow-up and support. • Can integrate cessation supports into existing workplace wellness initiatives. • Can build on existing tobacco control policies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costs, in terms of financial and human resources. • Group programs may not suit all workers. • Extensive training may be required. • Does not allow for anonymity. • May not accommodate different levels of addiction and readiness to quit. • There may be more and broader expertise and resources in the community. • Focussing on smokers in the workplace may stigmatize them and decrease success rates.
<p>Facilitated:</p> <p>Working with outside agencies to deliver programs and activities off-site, and providing self-help materials</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offers anonymity. • Makes use of external expertise, which means not "re-inventing the wheel" and ensures a level of expertise that may not exist within a workplace. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less accessible. • May be a high cost in terms of human resources at the outset. • Less flexible. • Less easy to tailor to specific workplaces. • Costs.

Approach	Pros	Cons
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workers can select the options that work best for them. Some communities have a variety of options to choose from and many resources (especially larger centres). Sends a message of commitment and support from the employer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding acceptable options may be difficult.
<p>Education and Information:</p> <p>Providing workers with information including self-help materials</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low cost. Better than no support at all if this is all that can be done. All workplaces can take this approach. Offers anonymity. Good option for highly motivated persons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The quit rates are lower for self-help. Education and information is not enough to change behaviour. Lacks ongoing support. Shows a lower level of support from the employer. Workers may not feel they are able to quit successfully on their own and this can be a barrier to action. Follow-up is not possible.

From: Health Canada, 2008. [Smoking Cessation in the Workplace: A Guide to Helping Your Employees Quit Smoking](#).

What is a sample workplace smoke- and vapour-free policy*?

Policy:

Due to the health and safety concerns from ignition sources (such as lit cigarettes) and exposure to second-hand smoke, ABC Company Inc. has instituted this policy to provide a smoke and vapour-free environment for all employees and visitors.

Definitions:

This policy covers the smoking of any tobacco product, the use of smokeless (spit) tobacco, and all electronic smoking devices.

Smoking or vaping is not allowed within the building at any time. Smoking and vaping is only allowed in designated smoking areas outside the building.

All materials used for smoking or vaping, including cigarette butts and matches, will be extinguished and disposed of in appropriate containers as provided. Supervisors will ensure periodic cleanups of the designated smoking area.

Smoking or vaping is not allowed in company vehicles at any time.

Supervisors will discuss the issue of smoking or vaping breaks with their staff. Together they will develop an effective solution that will not interfere with the productivity of the staff but allow for the wishes of the worker to be met.

Procedure:

Workers are informed of this policy through signs posted in buildings and vehicles, the policy manual, and will receive orientation and training from their supervisors.

Visitors will be informed of this policy through signs and it will be explained by their host.

The company will assist workers who wish to quit smoking by facilitating access to recommended smoking or vaping cessation programs and resources.

Any violations of this policy will be handled through standard disciplinary procedures.

* Adapted from: [Making Your Workplace Smoke free: A Decision Maker's Guide](#) by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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