

BEFORE THE BOARD OF HEALTH  
SPOKANE REGIONAL HEALTH DISTRICT

GUIDELINE AND RECOMMENDATION #16-02

A GUIDELINE AND RECOMMENDATION TO ENCOURAGE AND ASSIST EMPLOYERS IN IMPROVING THE HEALTH OF EMPLOYEES AND THE PUBLIC THROUGH THE CREATION OF SMOKE- AND TOBACCO-FREE WORKSITES.

**Purpose:**

The Board of Health encourages employers to improve the health of employees and the public through the creation of smoke- and tobacco-free worksites. Such policies are more restrictive than the state's no smoking law and provide greater protection of public health. Smoke- and tobacco-free workplace policies can limit areas where people can smoke or use tobacco or can prohibit smoking and the use of tobacco products anywhere on the property. Policies can apply to employees, customers and guests. Smoke-free policies can include the use of cigarettes, electronic cigarettes, cigars, hookah, and other combustible products that produce smoke or vapor, and may also include the use of smokeless tobacco. Employers also have the option to implement a policy not to hire people who use these products.

**Public Health Benefits:**

The Board of Health is taking this action because of the significant health consequences of smoking, vaping and using tobacco products:

- Smoking is the leading cause of disease, disability, and death in the United States and is responsible for 480,000 deaths each year. Smokers are more likely than nonsmokers to develop heart disease, stroke, and lung cancer. Smoking also causes diminished overall health, increased absenteeism from work, and increased health care utilization and cost.
- Evidence from multiple studies indicates that the vapor produced by vaping devices is not safe, having been found to contain chemicals known to cause cancer such as formaldehyde, acetaldehyde, lead, nickel and chromium; ultrafine particulates, acrolein, tin, toluene and aluminum which are associated with a range of negative health effects such as skin, eye and respiratory irritation, neurological effects, damage of reproductive systems and premature death from heart attacks and stroke; and toxic chemicals such as diethylene glycol which is toxic to humans. Vaping devices may contain nicotine and present a substantial risk of nicotine and other substance addiction. Further, secondhand vapor and/or aerosol emitted by the use of vaping devices contains chemicals and other substances that present a threat to the health of those exposed, with an elevated risk to pregnant women, children and people with cardiovascular conditions.
- Smokeless tobacco is also associated with many health problems, including cancer of the mouth, esophagus and pancreas, decreased oral health, and may increase the risk of heart disease and stroke.

Smoke-free worksite policies can also encourage and support smoking cessation and reduce smoking initiation. Research has demonstrated that environments that are smoke free help to establish norms that reduce the social acceptability of smoking, motivate smokers to quit and make it easier for them to do so.

**Other Benefits:**

A smoke- or tobacco-free worksite has benefits beyond protecting the health of the public, including many benefits for employers, such as increased productivity, decreased absenteeism, lower medical expenditures, and improved success for employees who have quit.

**Board of Health Action:**

The Board of Health applauds those business owners who have already taken this important action. The Board of Health encourages all businesses to consider similar action.

The Board of Health recommends that business owners use Spokane Regional Health District's *Smoke- and Tobacco-free Worksites: A guide to implementing a policy that protects employee and community health*. This toolkit provides a step-by-step guide to making worksites safer and healthier. Templates of model policies, tools to assess which policy options to choose, samples of employee surveys, suggestions for communicating the policy to employees, cessation resources, and answers to frequently asked questions are provided to make the transition to a smoke- or tobacco-free worksite a smooth one.

Signed this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 2016, in Spokane, Washington.

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