

Work environment – **General information**

15.01.03

# Developing a no smoking policy >

**This information bulletin outlines the basic considerations of developing a workplace no smoking, or 'smoke-free' policy and provides the contact telephone numbers of agencies who can assist workplaces in dealing with smoking issues.**

## Legislation

The [Workplace Health and Safety Act](#) outlines the responsibilities of employers to provide a safe workplace for both workers and other people (section 55). The *Act* also outlines the responsibility of workers to take appropriate care of both their own health and safety and that of other people (Section 59).

## The problem of smoking at work

Employers who allow smoking in their workplace are at risk of being sued by either employees or members of the public who suffer ill health as a result of passive smoking. 'Passive smoking' refers to the inhalation of environmental tobacco smoke (ETS). ETS contains over 4000 chemical compounds including 43 known carcinogens. ETS is an irritant to the eyes, the respiratory tract and to many people it has an offensive odour. It increases the chance of contracting or aggravating a range of illnesses including:

- cardio-vascular disease;
- lung cancer;
- asthma; and
- bronchitis, pneumonia and other chest illnesses in children.

## Developing a workplace no smoking policy

Recently, a growing awareness that passive smoking can harm the health of non-smokers has led to the widespread adoption of no-smoking or 'smoke-free' policies in workplaces and public areas.

Each workplace or industry should develop a policy which reflects their needs

### **The policy should:**

- result from adequate consultation with workers;
- aim to achieve a workplace which is free of ETS;
- state when the smoking ban comes into force;
- state the precise areas where smoking is no longer allowed;

putting safety first &gt;



- state that designated smoking areas must be outside, with no possibility of contamination of indoor areas;
- apply equally to all workers, including managers and supervisors;
- to the greatest degree possible, be non-punitive;
- state that new employees will be told when applying for a job, that the workplace has a 'no smoking' policy;
- be made known to all workers;
- state that workers who fail to look after the safety of other people at work by not complying with the no smoking policy can be personally liable to a fine under the *Workplace Health and Safety Act*;
- be part of a comprehensive health and safety program; and
- be evaluated after implementation and amended, if necessary, in line with the outcome of the evaluation.

***The following information should be considered when developing a 'smoke-free' workplace policy:***

- Policy development and staff acceptance will be enhanced if staff are advised of the reason for the policy. Reasons for such a policy include the health risks of ETS, concern about possible litigation and the need to conform with the legislation.
- There needs to be a firm commitment by senior management to give 100% support to the implementation of the policy from the start. The program is doomed to failure without it.
- Changes may need to be made to the work environment to support the policy. For example, if there is a 'phasing-in' period of say 6 - 12 months (to give smokers a chance to adjust to working in a 'smoke-free' workplace), an area where people can smoke needs to be provided. This area should be outside and made comfortable with shade and seating.
- The provision of treatment and/or referral services is an important part of a no smoking policy. Many smokers have used the change to a 'smoke-free' workplace as the impetus to quit. A list of Northern Territory agencies which can be contacted for assistance is overleaf. This list could be displayed on the staff notice board.

## Getting more help

### [SmokeFree NT](#)

Tobacco Hotline	1800 888 564
Quitline	137 848
Your local Quit group	(08) 8922 7703
Department of Health and Families	www.health.nt.gov.au
Amity Community Services	8981 8030
National Heart Foundation	8981 1966
Your local GP	

## Further information

Information on no smoking policy can be found in:

- NT WorkSafe information bulletin [15.01.10](#) Work Environment – tobacco smoke, employers duty of care
- NT WorkSafe information bulletin [15.02.01](#) Work Environment – indoor air quality in air-conditioned offices
- [NOHSC: 3019 \(2003\)](#) – Guidance note on the elimination of environmental tobacco smoke in the workplace.

## NT WorkSafe >

**GPO Box 1722**

**Darwin NT 0801**

**Telephone:** 1800 019 115  
**Facsimile:** (08) 8999 5141  
**Email:** [ntworksafe@nt.gov.au](mailto:ntworksafe@nt.gov.au)  
**Website:** [worksafe.nt.gov.au](http://worksafe.nt.gov.au)