

Employers

Why

An interdependence exists between employers and employees, so a smokefree workplace policy to protect the well-being of employees also contributes directly to the health and longevity of the company. Many employers provide employee health benefits and can realize financial savings from smokefree policies. Fortunately, employers are in an advantageous position to create smokefree policies because they have authority to set standards for employee behavior.

Recognizing employer-employee interdependence, courts have placed legal obligations on employers to provide safe and healthful working conditions and these obligations have been interpreted to include smokefree environments. Indeed, the first wave of plaintiffs seeking smokefree environments were employees. This trend is likely to intensify.

Legislation requiring smokefree environments has focused first on workplaces, along with health care institutions and places where children are present. A major reason Congress required airlines to eliminate smoking in flight was because airplanes were uniquely small and enclosed workplaces.

Small companies have a number of special concerns. First, most people work

for smaller companies, so policies are necessary there to protect the majority of employees throughout the nation. Second, ETS may be more hazardous in smaller facilities. Third, small companies are more likely to still allow smoking; most larger companies have already dealt with this problem. Fourth, a small company is more likely to have key, irreplaceable employees than larger companies. Losing an employee to a smoking-related disease, or having an employee leave the company for another job in a smokefree company, can be disrupting. Finally, economic losses from smoking are likely to loom larger for smaller companies.

How

Just as the creation and implementation of a new smokefree policy should follow the usual company methods for creating new policies, enforcement of smokefree rules should follow usual enforcement procedures. Deal with infractions as other personnel policy infractions are dealt with. If an employee takes too much time away from work to smoke, it should be treated in the same manner as if an employee took too many breaks for other reasons. (If extra breaks for smoking are given, nonsmoking employees may feel slighted.)



SMOKEFREE AIR
Everywhere

It is especially appropriate for employers to offer smoking cessation information and programs to help nicotine-addicted employees cope with new nonsmoking rules — employees spend long periods of time at work, and reduced smoking by employees usually leads to reduced expenses for employers. Offering employees' families cessation information and programs is also beneficial for two reasons: First, employees attempting to deal with their nicotine addiction need a supportive environment at home. Second, the employer may be providing health benefits for spouses and children; offering them cessation support is consistent with providing other health benefits and can help to lower the health care costs of family members.