

SMOKING INFORMATION

Overview of employer and employee requirements

There is no safe level of tobacco consumption.

Environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) is a significant hazard to the health of non-smokers. There is no safe level of exposure to ETS.

Under occupational health and safety legislation, employers are required to take all measures that are practicable to protect the health and safety of employees and others in the workplace. This entails employers identifying potential hazards, assessing the risks and taking steps to eliminate or control them.

As employers are responsible, as far as practicable, for the health and safety of workers and other persons who enter the workplace, smoking should be eliminated from workplaces.

A legislative obligation for health and safety at the workplace also applies to employees. Employees have a general duty of care to take 'reasonable' action to minimise the effects of their acts or omissions on the health and safety of all persons at their place of work. There is a further obligation to cooperate with the employer, to comply with State/Territory or Commonwealth health and safety legislation. Accordingly, smoking in workplaces should be prohibited and employees advised of the legal implications of their non-compliance.

For more information, see the following documents:

- » Guidance Note on the Elimination of Environmental Tobacco Smoke in the Workplace (SafeWork Australia)
- » Supporting smoke-free workplaces – a policy implementation guide (Department of Health WA)

The benefits of a smoke-free workplace

A 2008 Western Australian economic study found that the cost of tobacco use for business in 2004/05 was \$629.9 million. Introducing a smoke-free policy could greatly benefit your workplace for the following reasons:

- » Less employee absenteeism
- » Increased productivity on the job
- » Decreased early retirement due to ill health
- » Lower annual healthcare costs
- » Lower risk of fire damage, explosions and other accidents related to smoking
- » Lower fire insurance premiums
- » Lower cleaning and maintenance costs
- » Reduces the risk of legal action from second hand smoke injuries
- » Reinforces the commitment to a healthier workplace
- » Raises awareness of the health risks of smoking and encourages employees to cut down or quit