



Smoking Safety for Healthcare Facilities

The CompWest Difference

CompWest customers are assigned a dedicated loss control consultant to identify and address loss trends while serving as a safety resource.

The U.S. Surgeon General and other agencies report that tobacco smoke causes lung cancer and poses an increased risk of heart disease in adult non-smokers.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has further concluded that environmental tobacco smoke is a Group A Carcinogen.

Studies show that separating smokers and non-smokers within the same air space may reduce, but does not fully prevent, a non-smoker's exposure to environmental tobacco smoke.

For the safety and health of employees, the California Labor Code prohibits smoking in places of employment. For some healthcare employers, this presents a dilemma as patient smoking areas (interior or exterior) are allowed in long-term care facilities. Further predicaments arise for employees who must supervise residents who smoke in these designated areas.

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If a smoking area is provided for residents, the following measures are recommended for the safety of employees and patients alike:

- Post clear and prominent signs:
 - o Where smoking is prohibited within the facility, a sign stating “no smoking” should be posted at each entrance.
 - o Where smoking is permitted in designated areas of the facility, a sign stating “smoking is prohibited except in designated areas” should be posted at each building entrance.
- Residents who smoke must be formally assessed as to their capabilities and requirements for supervision. A resident deemed incapable of independent smoking should have this clearly documented in the care plan.
- A smoking apron should be worn by all smokers while in the designated area.
- Designated smoking area must be free of debris and combustibles. Fabrics in the smoking area should be fire retardant.
- Use and storage of medical oxygen use must be prohibited in the smoking area.
- A fire extinguisher and fire blanket should be available in the immediate vicinity and employees trained on their use.
- Smoking areas must be provided with non-combustible ashtrays. Metal containers with self-closing covers should be used for disposing ashtray contents.
- Smoking areas must be well ventilated. Tobacco smoke can not enter other adjacent work areas through windows, doors, ventilation systems, or by any other means.
- Ashtrays and other smoking materials must not be stored in any area where smoking is prohibited.

Caregivers should be given the choice of whether they wish to supervise the smoking resident and thereby be exposed to secondhand smoke. All employees should be given the right to refuse work in an active designated smoking area.

All related policies must be enforced with consistency.

The advice presented in this document is intended as general information for employers. See CompWestInsurance.com for the complete disclaimer/legal notice.

