



**North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
Office of Public Affairs**

2001 Mail Service Center • Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-2001
Tel 919-733-9190 • Fax 919-733-7447

Beverly Eaves Perdue, Governor

Lanier M. Cansler, Secretary

For release: Immediate

Date: Jan. 12, 2010

Contacts: Carol Schriber, N.C. DHHS Public Affairs Office, 919-733-9190

N.C. restaurants and bars observing new smoke-free law

Since North Carolina's new law banning smoking in nearly all bars and restaurants took effect Jan. 2, the N.C. CARE-LINE has received 174 telephone calls asking for information about the law, and there have been 858,595 hits to the website www.Smokefree.NC.gov since it was launched, reports the N.C. Division of Public Health. Statistics on the implementation of the law will be posted on Smokefree.NC.gov every Tuesday.

"We are pleased at the response to date with this new law, as it will protect the public's health and the health of restaurant and bar employees," said State Health Director Jeffrey Engel, MD. "We will be evaluating the impact of this new state law on the health of North Carolinians."

While smoking is no longer legal in most restaurants and bars, there are limited exceptions for cigar bars and non-profit private clubs, such as patriotic clubs and some country clubs. Lodging establishments must also restrict smoking and may reserve no more than 20 percent of their rooms for smoking.

Local health directors have the authority to enforce the law at the local level. People can file a complaint if they believe an establishment is not complying with the new law. The Division of Public Health is forwarding the complaints every week to local health departments for follow-up and investigation.

"We want to be clear that a complaint is not necessarily a violation," said Danny Staley, president of the N.C. Association of Local Health Directors. "Some establishments may not even realize the new law applies to them. It's up to local health departments to follow up on each complaint that is called in or entered on the website at www.Smokefree.NC.gov.

Only 171 complaints against specific restaurants and bars have been received to date. These include reports on the lack of non-smoking signs, ashtrays still in place, and businesses that are reported for allowing smoking to continue. There are roughly 24,000 establishments in the state affected by the new law.

There are three ways to report a possible business violation of the law: (1) call the local health department; (2) visit www.smokefree.nc.gov and complete an on-line form; or (3) call the N.C. CARE-LINE at 1-800-662-7030 (TTY 1-877-452-2514), which is open 7 a.m. to 11 p.m., seven days a week. CARE-LINE services are available in more than 150 languages. After hours, callers may leave a message and their call will be returned during CARE-LINE business hours.

###



Location: 101 Blair Drive • Adams Building • Raleigh, N.C. 27603

www.ncdhhs.gov

An Equal Opportunity Employer