

## **North Carolina restaurants and bars: Serving smoke-free air starting Jan. 2**

RALEIGH – North Carolina’s historic smoke-free restaurants and bars law goes into effect at midnight on January 2, rendering all restaurants and bars smoke-free indoors, with very few exceptions.

“This is a historic moment for the health of people in North Carolina,” said North Carolina Governor Bev Perdue. “This single action will save lives and improve the health of North Carolina residents, visitors and food service workers, as they will avoid many of the health problems caused by secondhand smoke.”

The new law, passed by the General Assembly and signed into law by Perdue in May, includes not only restaurants and bars, but other venues that serve food and are inspected by local health departments, including many recreational facilities, convenience stores, hotel common areas, and private/for-profit clubs. Hotels and other lodging facilities may designate no more than 20 percent of their guest rooms for smoking.

Exceptions from the smoke-free law include cigar bars that meet a list of criteria and non-profit private clubs, such as patriotic clubs and some country clubs.

A number of local communities are holding celebrations marking the start of the new law. Local health departments, which are responsible for the implementation of the law, should have details on local plans.

The new smoke-free law requires affected businesses to post no-smoking signs, remove ashtrays, and ask smokers to step outside to smoke. Businesses that repeatedly break the law can be fined up to \$200 per day. Smokers who refuse to smoke outside can be fined up to \$50 by local law enforcement for defying the law.

Enforcement is complaint-driven. Local health departments will investigate businesses based on filed complaints.

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](http://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) 7 a.m. - 11 p.m., seven days a week. CARE-LINE services are available in over 150 languages. After hours, you may leave a message and your call will be returned.

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