

# Smoke Free Parks & Beaches: FAQs



## What are the benefits of a smoking ban in the Burlington parks?

- *Decreases risk for immediate health problems in pregnant women, infants, children, the elderly and individuals with respiratory problems (i.e. asthma and allergies).* A single exposure to secondhand smoke has been shown to *cause* not only asthma attacks, but acute coronary events (heart attacks) in adults. (Institute of Medicine 2009 Report).
- *Decreases tobacco product litter - resulting in a cleaner environment and less litter to clean up.* Cigarette butts are not biodegradable. They are the most common form of litter found in recreation areas and the most collected item in international beach cleanups each year. For comparison, the cost to the City of Burlington to rid Church Street of cigarette butts before the 2014 smoking ban ordinance was between \$8- 10 K annually.
- *Increases the positive image of the park* enhancing its appeal in particular to families with young children, the elderly and those engaging in physical activity.
- *Sends a consistent message to our community, and in particular, Burlington youth.* Our workplaces, school districts, restaurants, and UVM and Church Street Marketplace already prohibit tobacco use. By eliminating tobacco use in our recreation areas, we send our youth and community members a consistent message about the harmful effects of tobacco. Children, who see adults using tobacco in a family-friendly place, may think smoking is acceptable and are more likely to copy the behavior. Tobacco-free policies encourage young people to make healthy choices and provide fewer opportunities to consider smoking.

## What is the health impact from being exposed to tobacco smoke outside?

According to the U.S. Surgeon General, "The scientific evidence is now indisputable: secondhand smoke is not a mere annoyance. It is a serious health hazard." The 2010 Surgeon General's report says, "There is no safe level of exposure to tobacco smoke. Any exposure to tobacco smoke – even an occasional cigarette or exposure to secondhand smoke – is harmful." Smoking is the #1 cause of preventable death in this country. 1000 Vermonters die each year from tobacco-related diseases.

When individuals inhale cigarette smoke, either directly or secondhand, they are inhaling more than 7,000 chemicals: hundreds of these are hazardous, and at least 69 are known to cause cancer. Even low levels of smoke exposure, including exposures to secondhand tobacco smoke, lead to a rapid and sharp increase in dysfunction and inflammation of the lining of the blood vessels, which are implicated in heart attacks and stroke. (2010 Surgeon Generals' report)

In a 2009 study that the CDC asked the Institute of Medicine to convene, they found, 1. "a causal relationship between smoke-free laws and decreases in acute coronary events" and 2. "a causal relationship between SHS exposure and acute coronary events, including heart attacks."<sup>1</sup>

In 2005, the California Air Resources Board (ARB) released a report that evaluated the first-ever monitoring of the level of outdoor exposure to secondhand smoke on the health of California residents. Based on the conclusions of this report, the ARB adopted a regulatory amendment that identified secondhand smoke as a toxic air contaminant - an outdoor air pollutant that may cause or contribute to an increase in deaths or in serious illness, or which may pose a present or potential hazard to human health.

<sup>1</sup> See full report at [www.nap.edu](http://www.nap.edu) *Secondhand smoke exposure and cardiovascular effects: Making sense of the evidence.*

## Is anyone else doing it?

Yes! Both here in Vermont and around the globe, municipalities, worksites and cities and towns are showing their support for clean air and healthy communities. As of Oct. 2, 2015, 1,155 US municipalities listed smoke-free parks and 251 listed smoke-free beaches.

*A few of the Vermont examples:*

- In 2013 Sharon, VT passed an ordinance prohibiting tobacco on all town-owned properties and in vehicles.
- There are smoke-free ordinances in Brattleboro, Londonderry's Pingree and Memorial parks, Enosburg Falls, Rutland, St. Albans and the Village of Woodstock.
- Since 2010, a Burlington ordinance supports smoke free zones within 25 feet of all shelters, beaches, playgrounds, and bleachers on Parks & Recreation property.
- Bennington, Manchester, St. Johnsbury and Essex Junction and Essex Town have posted no smoking signs in town parks. Both Rodchester and Vergennes Skate Parks have smoke-free policies.

*A few examples from major US cities:*

- As of May 23, 2011, all public parks, beaches, and pedestrian plazas in New York City have been smoke-free! New York City has joined Chicago, Los Angeles, Santa Monica and Seattle in passing this historic legislation that helps protect all individuals from the dangers of secondhand smoke and keep parks and beaches clean.
- A Boston, MA ordinance bans the smoking of cigarettes, marijuana, and other "lighted or vaporized" substances in 251 parks, squares, cemeteries, and other open spaces run by the Boston Parks and Recreation Department.

## Do tobacco products have an impact on the lake and environment?

Multiple litter studies have shown that when counting litter on a per-item basis, cigarette butts are the number one littered item on U.S. roadways and waterways.<sup>2</sup> Some of these butts discarded in public areas are then carried as runoff to drains, making their way to rivers and ultimately to oceans, lakes, and beaches.

Cigarette filters are made from cellulose acetate. Cellulose acetate is resistant to biodegradation and can persist in the environment for 18 months or more, even under ideal conditions for biodegradability.<sup>3</sup>

"Cigarette butts are poisonous when ingested by children and other living organisms, as evidenced by poison control center data, veterinary literature, and national reports.<sup>4 5 6</sup> Few studies of the toxicity of cigarette butts to aquatic ecosystems have been undertaken. Preliminary studies show, however, that the substances that seep out of cigarette butts are acutely toxic to freshwater micro-organisms, and the main causes of toxicity are organic compounds (nicotine and ethylphenol) in the cigarette butts. One study which identified and quantified components leached from cigarette butts found that they are a point source for heavy metal contamination in the environment for at least a month."<sup>7</sup> *From Truth Initiative factsheet (formerly American Legacy Foundation)*

## Are there reasons this is important for Burlington specifically?

In the Burlington area 13% of the adult population smoke, compared to 17% of all Vermonters (data from BRFSS 2011-12 Survey). That means that in our area 87% of the adult population does not smoke. Burlington area adults were significantly less likely to report currently smoking as compared with Vermont adults. Of smokers in our area, 61% reported trying to quit smoking at least once during the previous year.

*Burlington should be the leader in healthy initiatives for Vermont.* Because of our size, location, cultural diversity and other qualities, Burlington is often seen as the representative of Vermont communities and what we value. Our

<sup>2</sup> R.W. Beck. Final Report: Litter: A Review of Litter Studies, Attitude Surveys and Other Litter-related Literature. Keep America Beautiful, Inc., 2007 Available online: [http://www.kab.org/site/DocServer/Litter\\_Literature\\_Review.pdf?docID=481](http://www.kab.org/site/DocServer/Litter_Literature_Review.pdf?docID=481).

<sup>3</sup> Ach A. Biodegradable Plastics Based on Cellulose Acetate. *Journal of Macromolecular Science Part A*. 1993;30(9):733-740.

<sup>4</sup> Quirk JT. Cigarette-related injuries to young children in the USA, 2002-2007. *Public Health*. Sep 2009;123(9):628-629.

<sup>5</sup> Hackendahl NC, Sereda CW. The dangers of nicotine ingestion in dogs. *Veterinary Medicine*. 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Ingestion of cigarettes and cigarette butts by children--Rhode Island, January 1994-July 1996. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep*. Feb-14 1997;46(6):125-128.

<sup>7</sup> Moerman JW, Potts GE. Analysis of Metals Leached from Smoked Cigarette Litter. In Press, *Tobacco Control*. 2010.

community also has a great impact on the water quality of Lake Champlain. If we want Vermonters to value the creation of smoke free zones to protect our most vulnerable populations and our environment it is important that Burlington be a leader in this initiative.

### **How will a smoking ban be enforced?**

Businesses, cities, and colleges already implementing tobacco- or smoke-free policies have found that they are generally self-enforcing. As mentioned above, the majority of Vermonters are nonsmokers. These people, and the community norm they create, are a powerful influence on self-enforcement.

The power of positive thinking is very important for the enforcement conversation. Instead of focusing on "But how will we enforce it?" which makes people think about their police or security staff and the responsibility it puts on them, change the conversation to the positive. "How can we **increase compliance** with the new policy/ordinance?" Increasing compliance makes it a community issue that everyone is responsible for. However, adequate signage and communication about the policy is a crucial part of self-enforcement. The community needs to be very aware through clear signage in the smoke free areas and clear, consistent information about the consequences for non-compliance.

Additionally, park and beach staff should be aware of a smoking ban policy as part of orientation and given training on how to appropriately inform patrons who violate the policy. It is also important that park and beach staff are good role models for compliance to the policy.

### **Is it legal to ban smoking outdoors?**

Yes. There is no Constitutional right to smoke, nor are smokers a protected category of people under the Constitution or by law. Because secondhand smoke is a known carcinogen, and no level of exposure is risk-free, this is about supporting community health and respect for everyone's right to live, work, and play in a healthy and safe environment. This is not about the smoker, it is about the smoke.

*\*See the Vermont Department of Health website for information on VT smoke free laws:  
[http://healthvermont.gov/prevent/tobacco/restrictions\\_law.aspx](http://healthvermont.gov/prevent/tobacco/restrictions_law.aspx)*

### **What kind of help is available for people who want to quit smoking?**

Vermont has free proven resources to help smokers quit. 802Quits offers free smoking cessation support and resources to all Vermont residents, including students in residence at Vermont colleges.

- Online at 802Quits.org
- By phone at 1-800-QUIT-NOW
- In person with Vermont Quit Partners around the state (look on website or call phone number).

802Quits.org also offers tips, free tools to try at home and support to help people quit on their own.

### **What support is available for policy change implementation?**

Burlington's substance abuse prevention coalition, the Burlington Partnership for a Healthy Community (BPHC) has supported indoor and outdoor tobacco and smoke-free policy improvement on worksite and college campuses and in the Church Street Marketplace and can help with guidance through the process. BPHC can provide support, guidance and resources to help develop and implement any tobacco free policy. BPHC may also be able to help provide funding for signage and communication to inform park goers of changes to the smoke-free areas.

For more information contact BPHC Director, Mariah Sanderson at: [mariah@burlingtonpartnership.org](mailto:mariah@burlingtonpartnership.org)  
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## Smoking Ban in Burlington's Parks & Beaches

### Should Smoking Be Prohibited in Burlington's Parks and Beaches?

Hello! Members of the START Group would like to get your opinion about an important issue in our city. This survey will only take a couple of minutes and it is ANONYMOUS. Thank you for your help!

#### 1. What grade are you in?

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Fifth year / Other

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## Smoking Ban in Burlington's Parks & Beaches

**2. Do you use Burlington's parks, beaches and athletic fields/facilities?**

- Yes
- No

**3. How often do you visit Burlington's parks, beaches or athletic facilities?**

- One or more times a week
- One or more times a month
- One or more times a year

**4. Have you ever tried tobacco products including cigarettes/e-cigarettes or used smokeless tobacco (chewing tobacco)? Remember that this survey is anonymous.**

- Yes
- No

**5. In the past week, have you used tobacco or tobacco products (see examples above)?**

- Yes
- No

**6. Does anyone in your family or do any of your close friends use tobacco products?**

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**6. Does anyone in your family or do any of your close friends use tobacco products?**

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

**7. If smoking was prohibited at parks, beaches, outdoor sports facilities, skate parks and dog parks, would you be more likely to use them?**

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

**8. Which do you think is the best policy for Burlington's parks and beaches?**

- Do not allow smoking in our parks and beaches at all
- Allow smoking in designated smoking areas
- Allow smoking everywhere

**9. Did you know that inhaling secondhand smoke even once can *cause* not only asthma attacks, but also heart attacks in adults?**

- No, I had no idea!
- Yes, I knew this about secondhand smoke

**10. Please share with us positive ways that you choose to relieve stress (such as listening to music, exercising, playing in a band, participating in the school play or organized sports, etc.). Thank you!**

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**PREVIEW & TEST**