



Tobacco Free Ohio State, Policy 7.20 Frequently Asked Questions

Why Adopt a Tobacco Free Ohio State Policy?

1. Why go tobacco free?

The university strives to foster a healthy and productive environment for all students, faculty, staff, vendors, volunteers, and visitors. Tobacco use negatively affects the entire community and compromises Ohio State's decades of investment in a preventive health portfolio.

2. Is there state and federal support for the university becoming tobacco free?

The Ohio Board of Regents recently passed a resolution encouraging higher education institutions to become tobacco free. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is sponsoring a national initiative to eliminate tobacco use on college campuses. It is expected that more U. S. universities will work towards becoming tobacco free.

3. How does the Tobacco Free policy help the environment?

- Environmental tobacco exposes bystanders to numerous harmful chemicals.
- Cigarette butts make up most of the world's litter, and equal approximately, 1.7 billion pounds of the world's daily litter.
- Cigarette butts are a fire hazard, increase university maintenance expenses, and can be dangerous for dogs, birds and other animals that might eat them.
- Filters are non-biodegradable and can take 5-10 years to decompose.
- Chemicals (e.g., hydrogen, cyanide, arsenic, etc.) in cigarette butts leak into the soil and water.

4. Are students really at risk?

College is a critical time when young adults form many lifestyle habits. The university policy promotes sustained healthy behaviors among students. In 2020, nearly 13 of every 100 U.S. adults aged 18 years or older (12.5%) currently* smoked cigarettes. This means an estimated 30.8 million adults in the United States currently smoke cigarettes. More than 16 million Americans live with a smoking-related disease. Current smoking has declined from 20.9% (nearly 21 of every 100 adults) in 2005 to 12.5% (nearly 13 of every 100 adults) in 2020.

*(*Current smokers are defined as people who reported smoking at least 100 cigarettes during their lifetime and who, at the time they participated in a survey about this topic, reported smoking every day or some days.)*

5. Why prevent the university community from smoking outdoors? Is there really a health risk?

Yes, there really is a health risk. The Surgeon General has found there is no safe level of second-hand smoke. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, second-hand smoke contains more than 4,000 substances, several of which are known to cause cancer in humans and animals. The university strives to ensure that it maintains a healthy environment, and this policy's objective is to consider and address the impact of tobacco on the health and wellbeing of our faculty, staff, students, vendors, volunteers, and visitors.

What Is Permissible?

6. What does having a Tobacco Free Ohio State policy mean?

The policy prohibits tobacco use on all university owned, operated, and leased property. Furthermore, the university will not advertise or allow tobacco to be sold on its owned, operated, and leased property.

7. What is included in the term "tobacco?"

Tobacco is defined as all tobacco-derived or containing products, including and not limited to, cigarettes (e.g., clove, bidis, kreteks), electronic cigarettes, cigars and cigarillos, hookah smoked products, pipes, oral or nasal tobacco (e.g., spit and spitless, smokeless, chew, snuff, "snus"). It also includes any product intended to mimic tobacco products, contain tobacco flavoring, or deliver nicotine other than for the purpose of cessation.

8. Is abstaining from tobacco a condition of employment at Ohio State?

The policy does not address tobacco use as a condition of employment.



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9. Isn't it my right to use tobacco? Does Ohio State have the right to tell me I can't use tobacco products on campus property?

The university has a responsibility to establish policies that positively affect the health and wellbeing of all students, faculty, staff, vendors, volunteers, and visitors. The university policy does not prohibit tobacco use; it merely establishes that its use may not occur on university property.

10. Will it be OK to use smokeless tobacco, such as chew?

All forms of tobacco are prohibited. The health risks associated with "chew" as well as other smokeless tobacco products are well documented.

11. Will the use of hookahs and other devices for smoking tobacco be permitted?

Using hookahs or any other device to smoke tobacco is prohibited. Additionally, using hookahs to smoke non-tobacco products also is prohibited. Using hookahs and other devices promotes tobacco use as an acceptable behavior, which is not acceptable at Ohio State.

12. Are electronic-cigarettes (e-cigs) permitted?

E-cigs are not permitted. They contain tobacco flavoring and so are prohibited under our policy. There is insufficient evidence that these devices decrease a person's desire to smoke tobacco cigarettes, and they are not approved by the Food and Drug Administration as smoking cessation devices. Using e-cigs promotes tobacco use as an acceptable behavior, which is not the case at the university.

13. Can I use tobacco in my personal vehicle while on university property?

Parking lots and parking garages owned, operated, and leased by Ohio State are covered by the policy. Tobacco use is prohibited in all parked vehicles on university owned, operated, or leased property.

14. Does the Tobacco Free Ohio State policy apply at university sanctioned events or sporting activities occurring off campus property?

The Tobacco Free Ohio State policy applies only to university owned, operated, and leased property. Events or activities scheduled elsewhere are bound by the policies or rules of the event coordinator or property manager.

15. Are people permitted to use tobacco products at tailgates, sporting events and social events that occur on Ohio State property?

Tobacco use is prohibited on university owned, operated, and leased property. The university recognizes that remaining tobacco free requires an ongoing culture shift, and so it may take time for the community to adjust to the university's policy. We appreciate the support of the community as the university strives to ensure that it maintains a healthy environment, and this policy's objective is to consider and address the impact of tobacco on the health and wellbeing of our faculty, staff, students, vendors, volunteers, and visitors. We encourage students, faculty, and staff to take an active role in championing this effort by increasing awareness of the university policy at events they may attend.

Options for Tobacco Users

16. Are there resources to help employees and students quit using tobacco?

Ohio State encourages and supports students, faculty and staff who request assistance in eliminating their dependence on tobacco products. A list of resources is available at tobaccofree.osu.edu/

17. Can I go off campus during my breaks to smoke?

Yes. Employees can leave campus during scheduled breaks. Hourly staff who wish to smoke during their breaks may not extend the length of their breaks to do so and must still comply with any attendance policy their unit may have. Employees should not trespass, loiter, or litter on public or private property to smoke during breaks. Please respect Ohio State's neighbors.



Tobacco Free Ohio State, Policy 7.20 Frequently Asked Questions

If you don't have time to walk off campus during your break, review the cessation resources available to faculty, staff, and student employees. Tobacco cessation services are covered through Ohio State's medical plans. Enrolled faculty and staff must pay the applicable out-of-pocket expenses based on the service received. Individuals that are not enrolled in a university medical plan should contact their own insurance companies for possible coverage. A list of resources is available at hr.osu.edu/policy/resources/720cessation.pdf.

18. Can I extend my break or change the time of my break, so I have time to walk off campus to smoke?

Breaks are usually timed to ensure business needs are met. The length and time of breaks cannot be changed to accommodate tobacco use. Refer to unit policies and/or consult with your supervisors regarding options, if applicable. Policies and business practices must be applied fairly and consistently.

If you don't have time to walk off campus during your break, check out the cessation resources available to faculty, staff, and student employees. Tobacco cessation services are covered through Ohio State's medical plans. Enrolled faculty and staff must pay the applicable out-of-pocket expenses based on the service received. Individuals that are not enrolled in an Ohio State medical plan should check with their own insurance companies for possible coverage. A list of resources is available at hr.osu.edu/policy/resources/720cessation.pdf.

19. Am I able to attend tobacco cessation sessions during paid work time?

The university is supportive of tobacco users who desire to stop using tobacco products. Options for attending tobacco cessation sessions are based on the unit's business needs and may include flexible scheduling in accordance with the university's [Flexible Work Policy](#) and/or use of leave time in accordance with the university's [Paid Time Off](#) and [Unpaid Leave](#) policies. Submit these requests for a flexible schedule and/or time off or other leaves in a timely manner and schedule the time in a manner that is least disruptive to the administrative unit. Keep in mind there are several types of cessation resources; approval for time away from work to participate in a cessation program is subject to approval by the unit. Units may also consider providing additional cessation resources and education to their faculty and staff.

20. What will the university do about people leaving the campus or going across the street into neighboring properties to smoke?

While the policy only applies to university owned, operated, and leased properties, we ask that students, faculty, staff, volunteers, vendors, and visitors help maintain a positive relationship with our neighbors and respect neighboring properties outside the campus. Leaving campus to use tobacco or smoke does not give anyone permission to litter, loiter, or trespass on private or public property. Property owners have the right to enforce their boundaries. The university is committed to monitoring the impact on adjacent properties.

Handling Concerns with Individuals Who Use Tobacco on Campus

21. How will the university enforce the Tobacco Free Ohio State Policy?

The university's vision for the enforcement of the policy is one in which a tobacco free campus is viewed as the shared responsibility of all those in the campus community, tobacco users and non-users alike.

Individuals are encouraged and empowered to respectfully inform others about the policy in an ongoing effort to support individuals to be tobacco free, improve individual health and encourage a culture of compliance; however, substantiated chronic violations are subject to appropriate disciplinary action.

22. How will the university handle employees who do not want to stop the use of tobacco products?

Faculty, staff, and students are not required to stop using tobacco products, however they will not be permitted to use tobacco products on university property. Similar to other laws and/or regulations which prohibit smoking indoors, the university policy requires the university community to manage their need for nicotine in ways that do not involve their use of tobacco on campus.



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23. What if I see someone using tobacco on campus?

Being Tobacco Free promotes a healthier environment in which to live, work and study. Enforcement will depend upon the thoughtfulness, consideration and cooperation of all faculty, staff, students, vendors, volunteers, and visitors to comply with the policy and to encourage others to do the same. Anyone who observes a possible violation may courteously and compassionately inform the individual of the Tobacco Free Ohio State policy.

24. How do I handle a situation where I suspect someone is using tobacco (i.e., smokeless tobacco) but I'm not certain?

Address your concern with the individual, appropriately educate them about the policy, and connect them with resources.

25. What do I do if my request for someone to stop using tobacco is not effective?

Our individual responsibility is to educate people about the initiative. Not everyone will feel comfortable approaching someone who is using tobacco. If you choose to approach someone and are met with resistance, do not press the issue. Direct your specific concerns regarding noncompliance to the appropriate contacts listed within the policy.

26. As a supervisor, what is my responsibility if I receive reports or observe an employee violating the policy?

You are empowered to hold employees accountable to university policy expectations. First, explain the expectations outlined in the policy and provide appropriate resources. If there are continued violations, identify the impact of the employee's actions, and manage it appropriately. You are encouraged to contact your unit HR representative for help with how to address matters of non-compliance. Unit HR representatives who need further help should contact their assigned employee and labor relations consultant.

Miscellaneous

27. How will people know that tobacco use is prohibited?

Notices bearing the message "Tobacco Free" are posted at major university vehicular, pedestrian and building entrances. Whether or not a notice or sign is posted, all university property is Tobacco Free.

28. What are the boundaries of the university for the purposes of defining university property?

The boundaries include any property owned, operated, or leased by Ohio State. This includes and is not limited to all buildings and structures; sidewalks; parking lots; walkways; attached parking structures; and university owned, operated, or leased vehicles. This policy also applies to most public through streets that are within campus boundaries.

The [boundary map](#) is an approximate representation of the Columbus campus boundaries. The boundary map is intended for informational purposes only. University community members are encouraged to respect neighbors of the university. For regional campus maps please see the website for the respective campus. For other locations contact the appropriate university leader.

29. Are there exceptions to the policy?

Exceptions are identified in the policy exceptions document: hr.osu.edu/policy/resources/720exceptions.pdf.

30. Have other universities implemented tobacco free or smoke free policies?

There are now at least 2,604 100% smokefree campus sites. Of these, 2,176 are 100% tobacco-free, 2,253 prohibit e-cigarette use, 1,235 prohibit hookah use, 586 prohibit smoking/vaping marijuana, and 629 explicitly include personal vehicles on campus in the policy protections. U. S. Colleges and Universities with Smokefree and Tobacco-Free Policies are available at no-smoke.org/wp-content/uploads/pdf/smokefreecollegesuniversities.pdf.



Tobacco Free Ohio State, Policy 7.20 Frequently Asked Questions

31. Where can I find additional information about the Tobacco Free Ohio State policy and its implementation?

Information on the history and background of the Tobacco Free Ohio State policy is available at tobaccofree.osu.edu

The Tobacco Free Ohio State policy is available at hr.osu.edu/wp-content/uploads/policy720.pdf and its accompanying resources, are available at hr.osu.edu/policies-forms