



# SMOKE-FREE OUTDOOR EVENT

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# PLANNING GUIDE

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## Why host a smoke-free event?

Smoke-free events are becoming more common as smoking rates decline and awareness about the dangers of second-hand smoke and concerns about the environmental impact of smoking increase. Making your event smoke-free is a simple strategy to protect the health of attendees and decrease tobacco waste and its affiliated cleanup costs.

### Smoking rates

In 1965, 50% of Canadians smoked.<sup>1</sup> Today, Canada has one of the lowest smoking rates in the world. British Columbia leads the way with the lowest smoking rate in the country at 14%.<sup>2</sup>

### Does second-hand smoke really harm others?

Yes. In adults, even brief exposure to second-hand smoke at an outdoor event can damage the lining of blood vessels, cause blood platelets (blood cells that stop bleeding) to become stickier and potentially cause deadly heart attacks in people who have heart disease.<sup>3</sup> In babies and children it can cause respiratory infections, ear infections, and more severe asthma attacks which can be life-threatening.<sup>4</sup>

### Cigarette litter

Cigarette litter is the number one source of litter in North America.<sup>5</sup> When people discard cigarettes at outdoor events, runoff carries them to drains, rivers, and ultimately the ocean and its beaches.

Toxins leach into the surrounding water, harming plant and animal life.<sup>6</sup> Animals ingest cigarette butts mistaking them for food, which blocks their stomachs, and ultimately causes starvation and death.

## How to host a smoke-free event

### Understand your municipal smoking bylaw

Many municipalities in the Vancouver Coastal Health Region have smoke-free bylaws that prohibit smoking in parks, playgrounds, playing fields, and outdoor venues. See [www.vch.ca/your-environment/tobacco/tobacco-prevention/tobacco-protection/](http://www.vch.ca/your-environment/tobacco/tobacco-prevention/tobacco-protection/) for your municipal smoking bylaw.

### Have a communication plan

Before the event, notify staff, vendors, volunteers, and your guests, that your event will be smoke-free. This can be done through emails, meetings, Facebook, your event website and/or advertising.

### Use smoke-free event signage

Placing smoke-free event signage throughout your venue is an important and easy way to educate attendees and improve compliance with the policy or bylaw. Vancouver Coastal Health has created signage to post throughout your outdoor event venue. This signage can be ordered by emailing [smokefree@vch.ca](mailto:smokefree@vch.ca) or by downloading it at [www.vch.ca/your-environment/tobacco/](http://www.vch.ca/your-environment/tobacco/).

## Think about enforcement

Putting up signage is often all that is required to make your event smoke-free. However, simple, non-confrontational reminders (verbal or information cards) can be effective when dealing with non-compliance. Security staff and/or police should be notified if a person becomes aggressive towards staff.

### Previous Smoke-Free Events in the Vancouver Coastal Health Region

- Caribbean Days Festival, City of North Vancouver
- MEC Bike Fest, North Shore
- Community Day, West Vancouver
- Ironman Canada, Whistler

## Where to find support

Vancouver Coastal Health Tobacco Reduction Coordinators are available to answer questions you may have about creating 100% smoke-free outdoor events. Website: [www.vch.ca/your-environment/tobacco/tobacco-prevention/](http://www.vch.ca/your-environment/tobacco/tobacco-prevention/)

## Use an implementation checklist

- Verify the existing bylaw where the event will take place — does the bylaw apply to your location?
- Notify staff, vendors, volunteers, and your guests that your event will be smoke-free.
- Print/order the smoke-free event signs.
- Designate team member(s) to put up the signs at the event.
- Decide who will be responsible for addressing patrons who contravene the policy or bylaw during the event.
- Contact Vancouver Coastal Health Tobacco Reduction Coordinators if questions or concerns arise.

1 Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada. (2012). Percentage of Canadians who smoke (on either a daily or occasional basis), federal surveys by Health Canada\* and others, 1965–2011.

2 Statistics Canada. (2015). Canadian Community Health Survey, 2014.

3 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2006). The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health.

4 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2006). The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to

Tobacco Smoke: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health.

5 Novotny, T. E., & Slaughter, E. (2014). Tobacco product waste: an environmental approach to reduce tobacco consumption. *Current environmental health reports*, 1(3), 208–216.

6 Novotny, T. E., Lum, K., Smith, E., Wang, V., & Barnes, R. (2009). Cigarette butts and the case for an environmental policy on hazardous cigarette waste. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 6(5), 1691–1705.



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