

NEW POLICY WILL GIVE SMOKERS IN WEST CHESTER, PA, FEWER PLACES TO SMOKE



Smoking or non? The standard greeting at a restaurant is virtually unheard these days. Although there is no federal law prohibiting people from smoking indoors in public locations, some states, including California, Massachusetts and South Dakota, have adopted a statewide ban which would prevent smokers from doing just that. Now it seems that some places are making it even harder for people to find somewhere to light a cigarette. In West Chester, Pennsylvania, a new policy on smoking was proposed by the Chester County Wellness Committee. The policy would prohibit anyone from smoking within 25 feet of any entrance to a county building, including the West Market Street building which houses administrative offices for the county. Smoking would only be allowed in specific places out of the public's sight. This would pertain to not just county employees, but to any person(s) visiting the facilities, as well as clients and contractors. The Wellness Committee consists of employees from Chester County's Health Department and Human Resources Department. Human Resources Director Karen Florentine said, "What is happening is that people are having to walk through a cloud of smoke in order to enter our buildings." She said that there were "concerns" about people "having to move through smoking areas." The new policy is expected to go into effect today, Nov. 30th. The Government Services Center in the West Goshen Township would be affected without delay, as a designated space for smokers has already been chosen. Such an area has not been selected for additional buildings, such as the Justice Center, the county prison, and two of the county's libraries, but they are also anticipating the new policy and corresponding smoking areas. Like many other cities and states, Chester County commissioners had previously prohibited smoking inside county offices and buildings. Consequently, people have been smoking just outside the buildings' doors, leaving many others no choice but to walk through a cloud of smoke to enter a building. "Slipstream smoke has been identified as a health hazard," commissioners Chairman Terence Farrell said. "People who come into our buildings through a fog of smoke are being endangered even though they don't smoke." One employee implied that passersby may not appreciate seeing a congregation of people smoking at a building's entrance. Kathi Cozzone, commissioners Vice Chairwoman, suggested another potential advantage to the policy. She stated that, "if a couple of people stop smoking because they have to walk farther, that's good." Director of facilities management Steve Fromnick said that the policy would be enforced by county staff or by the sheriff deputies who watch the buildings. Currently it is unknown if the policy will include Chester County district courts, as most of those offices reside in privately owned buildings rented by the county. President Judge James P. MacElree II will be meeting with magisterial district judges to decide on the policy's relation to, or any similar policy for, the district courts.

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