

Outdoor smoking banned in Village of Great Neck

By the CNN Wire Staff

January 7, 2011 2:20 a.m. EST



Sidewalk smoking ban

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Outdoor smoking banned in the Village of Great Neck in New York
- Merchants complained of smoke coming into their businesses, mayor says
- Violators could face a fine up to \$1,000

Great Neck, New York (CNN) -- If you want to smoke on the sidewalk of the Village of Great Neck, it might cost you \$1,000.

The local board of the Village of Great Neck in Long Island voted this week to ban smoking on sidewalks outside of businesses along the main street, as well as in some other public places.

The village is part of a wealthy New York City suburb and claims to be the first municipality in New York state to enact such a measure.

"Merchants complained to me that smoke was coming into their buildings and their customers were complaining," said Great Neck Village Mayor Ralph Kreitzman, himself

a former smoker. "What we want to do is, for the benefit of our residents, avoid the inconvenience and detrimental effect of secondhand smoke."

Violators could face a fine of up to \$1,000. Smoking also is prohibited in the Village Green Park, the Village's Housing Authority and on benches in municipal parking lots.

The move is generating strong opinions.

"We walk on the street, taking in second- and thirdhand smoke that we're inhaling and our children are inhaling," said resident Joan Litt. "It's just horrible."

A smoker who identified herself only as Sophia had this take on the ban: "If my smoke bothers people, how about the cars?" she said. "Shut off the engines of the cars. We breathe carbon monoxide. ... That's unhealthy, isn't it?"

Bruce Zipes, who opened Bruce's Bakery in 1983 and remembers when people could smoke in his restaurant, said he has mixed feelings about the ban.

"I think it's a pretty good idea, Zipes said. "Their intentions are good, but it's another right and another privilege that the government is taking away from us."

In nearby New York City, there is a move to ban public smoking in parks, beaches and pedestrian plazas.

Kreitzman said he's been getting calls from local leaders commending him, and he hopes other jurisdictions follow Great Neck's example.

"We're trying to educate people, we're not looking to penalize people," Kreitzman said. "I'm not looking to make money from this. But, we can give out summonses and under our code, there's a maximum fine of \$1,000, but that's up to a judge."

Smoker rights advocate Gary Nolan, who is with a group called the Smoker's Club, blasted the village's move as "political correctness run amok."

"It's junk science that's being used to take away personal and private property rights," Nolan said. "It's been extended now out into the streets, one wonders how far the government can go."

CNN's Adam Reiss and Meghan Rafferty contributed to this report.