



Princeton bans smoking at parks, pools

By [Jon Offredo/The Times of Trenton](#)

on March 21, 2013 at 8:20 AM

Princeton became the first town in Mercer County to ban smoking on municipal property at Tuesday night's board of health meeting.

The ban would begin in about 20 days and would include municipal buildings, parks, pools and town-owned recreation areas, Princeton Health Officer David Henry said.

Potential smoking areas on municipal-owned properties would need to be at least 35 feet away from all entrances and ventilation intake systems.

That could mean some current smoking areas would need to be moved, Henry said.

"We're not trying to outlaw smoking for those employees who still do it, but we do have an ordinance that is set to encourage young folks and everybody else in the public not to be smoking around municipal buildings," he said.

Health officers and Princeton police would enforce the ordinance, passing out \$250 fines for first-time offenders, \$500 for the second time and \$1,000 for any third and further offenses.

"The aim is not to ticket people," Henry said. "It's basically to educate the public and to encourage a change in behavior in regards to smoking, primarily amongst the young people."

Rachel Lendner of Tobacco-Free for a Healthy New Jersey, which is part of the American Cancer Society, said the aim of these ordinances is not to make money.

"Having worked with many, many municipalities over the past number of years who have done this, they really pretty much never hand out a summons," she said. "Their attention is purely related to public health."

Signs donated by the American Cancer Society will be posted at the nonsmoking sites.

How many signs, when and where, is still being figured out, Henry said.

The exact smoking areas also are still being hammered out.

Town Administrator Robert Bruschi said in an e-mail yesterday that the ban would not affect smoking at the 400 Witherspoon St. municipal complex, where there is a remote patio for smokers that can be only accessed through the building.

However the 35-foot buffer may cause the patio to move, Henry said.

Bruschi said that the smoking area at the old borough municipal building would be affected by the ban, as well as a few other areas used by municipal workers, which may or may not be officially sanctioned smoking areas.

"Our foreman in charge of building and grounds is going to reach out to the health department and make sure that whatever area is chosen is in compliance," Bruschi said in the e-mail. "We are going to check the smoking area at the 400 Witherspoon building but I do believe it is compliant since it is not near a public entrance or even a public area."

Town hot spots like Hinds Plaza are already covered under a smoking ban due to the open space's proximity to the public library.

There are 164 other municipalities across the state with similar ordinances, but Princeton's is the first in Mercer County.

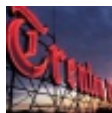
Three other municipalities across the state passed similar ordinances in the last month, including Perth Amboy, Garfield and Palisades Park.

Lendner said that in general the ordinances are self-enforcing, empowering citizens to ask other people to stop smoking and raise a generation of nonsmokers by presenting a proper role model.

"Every time another ordinance gets passed, and another set of signs go up in these parks not to smoke, we're sending a message to our children that smoking in public places is not a socially acceptable activity," she said.

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