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## Utah's hookah ban in effect

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With a few exceptions, puffing on hookah pipes or e-cigarettes is now illegal in Utah businesses.

HB245 went into effect May 8. It adds e-cigarettes and hookahs to the Utah Indoor Clean Air Act's ban on smoking tobacco or cigars in publicly-accessible, enclosed indoor facilities.

However, the bill extends an exemption through July 1, 2017, to some businesses that already permit hookahs and e-cigarettes.

The hookah businesses must apply to the Utah Department of Health for the exemption by July 1. To qualify, the businesses must have met the following criteria as of Jan. 1, 2012:

- It had and maintains a class C or D liquor license;
- It has sold and currently sells a mixture of tobacco and other flavors “for the purpose of heating, inhaling, and exhaling through a hookah pipe”;
- At least 10 percent of its gross sales come from the sale of mixed tobacco and other flavors for use in a hookah.

The new law says that businesses that primarily sell e-cigarettes — they have to derive 75 percent of their gross sales from the devices — can demonstrate their use and allow customers to sample the products. However, no one under age 19 would be allowed in.

Steve Hadden, health program specialist with the health department's Tobacco Prevention & Control Program, only expects a handful of businesses to qualify for the hookah exemption. However, the department is sending letters to all businesses with a class C or D license. Those establishments that seek the exemption would also have to post signs warning about the dangers of secondhand smoke, among other restrictions.

“Any exposure to secondhand smoke has some risk,” Hadden said.

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