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Princeton Bans Smoking on Municipal Properties

Starting in mid-April, smokers who visit or work at municipal properties in Princeton will have to be at least 35 feet away from all entrances and ventilation systems before lighting up. This ban also extends to parks, pools, and any recreation areas owned by the town.

The measure goes into effect on or around April 12, according to Princeton's Health Officer David Henry. "We're trying to look out for younger people, children and adolescents, as well as those [older] who already smoke, to try and see if we can modify behavior so they won't start smoking," he said this week.

While there are more than 150 municipalities in New Jersey that have passed similar smoking bans, Princeton is the first in Mercer County to do so, Mr. Henry said. The measure was voted on at a Board of Health meeting last week.

Those who police find ignoring the new ordinance would receive \$250 fines for first-time offenses, \$500 for the second time, and \$1,000 for the third or more. The American Cancer Society has donated signs to be posted at the designated non-smoking areas.

Mr. Henry said the ban was first addressed after former New Jersey Health Commissioner Fred Jacobs spoke about the issue at a health officers' conference last January. With the aid of Princeton Council member Heather Howard, the ordinance was written, a public meeting was held, and the ordinance was passed.

"Prior to this, there was no policy for prohibiting smoking outdoors, although there was no smoking allowed in Hinds Plaza and the Community Pool area," Mr. Henry said. "Now, the prohibition has expanded to all public properties owned by Princeton so we're talking about parks, playgrounds, ball fields, recreation areas, and municipal

buildings, where there is a 35-foot buffer zone for every entrance.”

The ordinance also prohibits smoking in any municipal vehicle registered in Princeton.

While no one spoke at the board meeting against the measure, a few people have registered complaints since it was announced. “We’ve seen a couple of complaints in various on-line commentary, but that’s pretty much been about it,” Mr. Henry said.

<http://www.towntopics.com/wordpress/2013/03/27/princeton-bans-smoking-on-municipal-properties/>