

Smokefree England

Signage Guidance for Churches, Places of Worship and Church/Parish Halls

From 1 July 2007 virtually all enclosed public places and workplaces in England will become smokefree. The new law is being introduced to protect employees and the public from the harmful effects of secondhand smoke.

So how does this affect churches?

The new smokefree law will apply to virtually all 'enclosed' and 'substantially enclosed' public places and workplaces. This includes both permanent structures and temporary ones such as tents and marquees, and includes churches, places of worship and church/parish halls. The new law also requires certain types of vehicles used for work (including voluntary work) to be smokefree, but not vehicles that are primarily for private use.

From 1 July, those people who control or manage smokefree premises and smokefree vehicles will have legal responsibilities to prevent people from smoking. The new law will require no-smoking signs to be displayed in all smokefree premises and vehicles.

What sort of signs do we need?

No-smoking signs that are required to be displayed must meet the following minimum requirements:

- be a minimum of A5 in area (210mm x 148mm)
- display the international no-smoking symbol at least 70mm in diameter^{*}
- carry the following words in characters that can be easily read:

No smoking. It is against the law to smoke in these premises

Where should the signs be displayed?

The new law says that signs 'need to be displayed in a prominent position at every entrance to smokefree premises'. It does not stipulate the precise location (such as on the door), in order to afford maximum flexibility for signs to be displayed in the most appropriate place in the premises. In churches, doors which are not in use could arguably not be entrances for use by persons.

It will be up to each church body (eg, select vestry/parochial church council) to choose the most appropriate place in the building for the sign, as long as the sign is prominently displayed. It is not necessary for it to be permanently fixed to the fabric of the building. It may be that the sign could be displayed within a porch at the front of the church or on a notice board which is near the main entrance. If you have any questions about the new law (for example, you are unsure about where a sign should be positioned), we recommend you consult your environmental health officer at your local council (who will be responsible for compliance) for further information. Their role will be to help you – it is not the intention of enforcement authorities to approach churches in a punitive way.

^{*} The international no-smoking symbol consists of a graphic representation of a single burning cigarette enclosed in a red circle of at least 70mm in diameter with a red bar across it.

In addition, smaller signs consisting of the international no smoking symbol only (at least 70mm in diameter) must be displayed at external entrances to smokefree premises that are only used by members of staff (eg, vestry) – providing the premises displays at least one A5 area sign.

Do we have to pay for these signs?

No. Free no-smoking signs can be downloaded and printed or for a limited time, ordered from smokefreeengland.co.uk/resources or by calling 0800 169 1697.

Churches can also display personalised signs by changing the words ‘these premises’ to refer to the name or type of premises – such as ‘this church’, ‘this hall’ etc, as long as the sign meets the minimum requirements set out in the new law.

Why is this necessary?

The signs will make it clear which premises and vehicles are smokefree and will demonstrate that the church authorities are taking the necessary steps to meet the requirements of the new law. They also provide some degree of legal protection for the church authorities in the unlikely event of someone being caught smoking on church premises.

What is the requirement for vehicles?

The new law will require vehicles (including those used by churches) to be smokefree at all times if they are used either to transport members of the public, or in the course of paid or voluntary work by more than one person – regardless of whether the persons are in the vehicle at the same time or at different times. Vehicles that are used primarily for private purposes will not be required to be smokefree.

Smokefree vehicles will need to display a no-smoking sign consisting of the international no-smoking symbol* in each compartment of the vehicle in which people can be carried.

Where can I find further information on Smokefree legislation?

Log onto smokefreeengland.co.uk or phone the Smokefree England Information Line on 0800 169 1697 for the full guidance and to order or download free signs.

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