

Smoking ban expanded to include outdoor areas of universities, private-hire cars

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Singapore

Picture of a man smoking. (Photo: AFP/ERIC FEFERBERG)

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SINGAPORE: From Oct 1, it will be an offence to smoke in outdoor areas of universities, private education institutions and in private-hire cars from companies such as Uber and Grab, announced the National Environment Agency (NEA) in a media release on Tuesday (Sep 26).

Smokers will also have to stub out before boarding excursion buses and trishaws, NEA added.

In addition, smoking is not allowed within a five-metre radius of educational institutions like childcare centres, kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, madrasahs, junior colleges, polytechnics and Institute of Technical Education campuses.

This is an extension of the Smoking (Prohibition in Certain Places) Act, which aims to reduce the public's exposure to second-hand smoke, and to support the national effort to promote a smoke-free lifestyle in Singapore, said NEA.

The agency has been gradually expanding the list of smoke-free places covered under the Act in consultation with the public and relevant stakeholders.

Smoking has been banned in enclosed and air-conditioned areas in universities since August 1997, but the new restrictions cover outdoor areas as well. Varsities and private education institutions that offer degree programmes, however, can still set up designated smoking areas outdoors.

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ENFORCEMENT ACTION TO BE TAKEN FROM 2018

In the first three months of the ban, NEA said it will take an "advisory approach" towards offenders who will be given verbal warnings.

"This is to give members of the public time to adjust to the smoking prohibition extension. However, smokers who repeatedly flout the law in spite of prior warnings may be issued a fine," NEA said.

Enforcement action will be taken against all offenders from Jan 1, 2018.

NEA said it has been working with the relevant stakeholders to ensure that "No Smoking" signs will be put up within the affected premises and that bins with ashtrays will be shifted or replaced with bins without ashtrays.

The agency added that it will raise awareness among the community through educational outreach materials, work with building owners to disseminate information to affected stakeholders and activate volunteers to advise smokers on the new restrictions.

With the extension of the ban smoking will be prohibited in more than 32,000 places including shopping malls, offices, hospitals, schools, parks, bus stops and common areas of residential buildings, NEA said.

The agency said it takes a strict stance against smokers who flout the law, noting that in 2016, about 19,000 tickets were issued for smoking in prohibited areas.