



Communicating Concerning Oregon's New Smoking Law and Willamette's New Smoking Courtesy Policy

Effective January 1, 2009, Willamette issued a new policy prohibiting smoking within 25 feet of all University buildings. With this policy comes the challenge of enforcement, a challenge all employees share as stewards of the campus environment. This Q & A should help employees of Willamette better respond to challenges faced when encountered with people violating the new policy.

Q. Why did Willamette adopt this new policy?

A. Willamette University believes in providing a healthful campus environment for all students, faculty, staff and visitors and we believe that preventing secondhand smoke from entering University buildings through doors, air intakes, windows and other points of entry can help in this regard. There is also a new State of Oregon mandate that contributed to the development of this policy.

Q. Doesn't the new state mandate require employers to prohibit smoking within 10 feet of buildings? Why does Willamette's policy specify 25 feet?

A. The ultimate objective of the policy and the new state law, as well as Willamette's goal, is to prevent secondhand smoke from entering buildings. Willamette's buildings, in some places, are oriented relative to one another in such a way that a 10 foot limit would not have adequately prevented smoke from entering a building.

Q. What are other schools doing to comply with the new state law? Aren't some campuses entirely smoke-free?

A. Many schools have adopted entirely "smoke free" campuses. Some were smoke free before the new law passed. Willamette already had a policy prohibiting smoking within all buildings, including residential facilities, but decided to balance competing rights of smokers and non-smokers by limiting, but still permitting, smoking on campus.

Q. Don't smokers have a right to smoke?

A. Those who choose to smoke certainly have a right to make that choice, however, on Willamette's campus, per our policy, "the right of the non-smoker to enjoy a campus environment free of smoke supersedes the right of the smoker to smoke on campus."

Q. Are there designated places for those who choose to smoke to do so?

A. There are no designated places to smoke on campus. Willamette has maintained smoking receptacles situated at least 25 feet from buildings at various places around campus to prevent littering of smoking debris.

Q. What is the best way to inform people who are violating the smoking courtesy policy?

A. As always, be polite. One can be respectful of a person's right to smoke while still informing a person that he/she is violating a policy (and a State law). Simply remind the person of the policy and, if necessary, refer them to the no-smoking sign that should be posted at all entrances to the building. If smoke is, in fact, entering the building and causing a problem for someone, it may also help to inform the person of this reality. Refrain from debate on the subject. If there is refusal or continuing problems, contact Campus Safety or Human Resources for assistance.

Sample responses to someone violating the smoking courtesy policy:

“Excuse me. I’m sorry to inconvenience you, but would you mind smoking away from the building. Smoking is not permitted within 25 feet of University buildings. Thank you.”

“Hi. I’m not sure if you noticed the sign, but smoking isn’t permitted within 25 feet of University buildings. There are some receptacles at various places around campus. Thanks.”

“Hello. Willamette has recently adopted a new policy banning smoking within 25 feet of University buildings. It’s intended to prevent smoke from entering buildings and air handling systems through openings and air intakes. Would you mind moving out a bit? Thank you.”

“Hi. Did you know that smoking isn’t permitted within 25 feet of University buildings? Willamette recently adopted this policy to prevent smoking from entering buildings and also due to a new state law. I was hoping you could move out a bit as I’ve noticed smoke entering the building.”

“Excuse me. Please move away from the building with your cigarette. I’m not sure if you noticed this sign, but Willamette does not allow smoking within 25 feet of University buildings. Thanks.”

If a person fails to heed your communication, do not escalate the encounter.
Simply leave and contact Campus Safety at ext. 6911 to come and address the situation.