



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) Benton County Tobacco-Free Facilities and Grounds



Why go tobacco-free?

To promote the long-term health and safety of employees and the public, all Benton County facilities and grounds are tobacco-free as of January 1, 2013.

Tobacco use is still the leading preventable cause of death and disability in Benton County, which costs our county more than \$34 million each year. The list of diseases linked to tobacco use is expanding well beyond the general health risks of coronary heart disease, stroke, cancer and chronic lung disease. Even exposure to secondhand smoke is a major health risk. In fact, **the Surgeon General has declared that there is no safe level of exposure.**

While the health of employees and visitors is the primary focus, the policy is also essential to our ongoing responsibility to steward public resources and the environment. Smoking is estimated to be the number one cause of fire related death and injury, and is a major cause of wild-land fires. The environmental impact of smoking is also large as cigarette filters are toxic and are the most frequently littered item.

I thought smoking was already prohibited. How is this policy different?

Smoking and vaping are already prohibited inside all Benton County facilities and within 10 feet from doors, windows that open, accessibility ramps, and ventilation intake vents in accordance with Oregon's Indoor Clean Air Act (ORS 433.835-870).

The Benton County tobacco-free policy expands upon the Indoor Clean Air Act in two significant ways:

1. The Benton County policy prohibits the use of all tobacco products and electronic cigarettes, including smokeless tobacco.
2. It does not allow the use of tobacco products on all property owned or occupied by Benton County, including doorways, front porches or outdoor foyers, parking lots, parks, natural areas and the Fairgrounds.

What is not allowed in the policy?

The policy does not allow the use of all tobacco products at all times indoors and on outdoor property owned or occupied by Benton County, including parks, natural areas and the Fairgrounds. This also includes doorways, front porches or outdoor foyers, and parking lots. In addition to cigarettes and cigars, the policy prohibits use of electronic cigarettes and smokeless tobacco products including: dip, chew, snuff, and snus.

Who does the policy apply to?

The policy applies to all Benton County employees, volunteers, interns, clients, visitors and vendors on property owned or occupied by Benton County.

Why are parks, natural areas, and the Fairgrounds included in the policy?

We already have invested significantly in our parks, natural areas and the Fairgrounds. By creating tobacco-free spaces, we will protect that investment and promote the health of our community, environment and the County's bottom line.

Health

Providing tobacco-free places for outdoor recreation and enjoyments protects Benton County residents from secondhand smoke, helps smokers quit and shows youth that tobacco use is not the norm.

Environment

Tobacco-free policies promote cleaner, safer and more beautiful environments now and for generations to come. Cigarette butts are the most common source of litter, take decades to decompose and release toxins into the water supply. Tobacco litter is also commonly ingested by young children, wildlife and pets.

Cost

A tobacco-free policy will save us money by reducing maintenance costs, lowering the risk of fire and lessening the health impact of tobacco use – which costs our county more than \$34 million each year.

Why is smokeless tobacco not allowed?

Benton County is concerned with providing a safe and nurturing environment where families and individuals can thrive and prosper. While the use of smokeless tobacco products does not affect non-users in the same way secondhand smoke does, products like chewing tobacco and snuff are also addictive and pose serious health risks to those who use them. Smokeless tobacco contains 28 cancer-causing agents, and users have an increased risk of developing mouth cancer or other oral health problems, including lesions and recession of the gums.

Additionally, smokeless tobacco litter impacts the appearance and maintenance of public property and can endanger the health of children, wildlife and pets. Because of this, the policy covers all tobacco products.

Why are electronic cigarettes not allowed?

Electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) are battery-operated devices designed to look like and be used in the same manner as conventional cigarettes. E-cigarettes use cartridges to deliver vaporized nicotine through a solution and release a vapor that looks like smoke. This poses an enforcement challenge of the tobacco-free policy. In addition, the safety and potential dangers associated with e-cigarettes have not yet been determined. Because of this, e-cigarettes have been included in the policy.

The 2016 report from the Surgeon General confirms that e-cigarette use by youth and young adults is a public health concern. Data shows that e-cigarette usage among high school students has increased 900% between 2011 and 2015. This report also confirms that there is no acceptable level of nicotine for youth. E-cigarettes as a delivery system for nicotine, can cause addiction and harm to the developing brain. You can access more information about this report here: <https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/>

Isn't it a person's right to use tobacco?

Tobacco is still a legal product for adults. Employees, clients and visitors who choose to use tobacco may continue to do so. We just politely ask them not to use tobacco during their time on Benton County property.

How will people know that tobacco use is not allowed on property owned or occupied by Benton County?

Benton County is taking a proactive approach to implementing this policy. Signage clearly indicates that no tobacco use is allowed on the grounds or in the buildings. Printed and web-based materials containing information about the policy are also available. Additionally, Benton County employees who work directly with the public have received information and training on educating visitors about the policy.

What if I see someone using tobacco on Benton County property?

Eighty six percent of adults in Benton County don't smoke. The majority of people who do smoke look for "tobacco-free" signs, and will comply with the policy if they are aware of it – even in areas with limited or no staff presence.

If you see another person using tobacco on Benton County property, assume that they aren't aware of the policy. After the policy is explained, most tobacco users will be happy to comply. If you approach someone, please remember to be polite and friendly. The primary purpose of this policy is to promote health and provide help to quit tobacco.

Where can I go to use tobacco while I'm on Benton County property?

If you plan to use tobacco products, please do so at a location that is not on Benton County property. We encourage you to be respectful of the environment and our neighbors by taking your trash to a receptacle and keeping sidewalks and walkways open.

If you need any clarification on property boundaries, please consult the Benton County Tobacco Prevention & Education Coordinator at (541) 766-2101.

Are there designated smoking areas?

There are no designated smoking areas on Benton County properties. Providing a place to use tobacco does not support our goal to create a healthier environment for our employees, volunteers, interns, clients, visitors and vendors. We are also working to support those who wish to quit tobacco products by preventing any "triggers" like smoking areas that make cessation difficult.

If you plan to use tobacco products, please do so at a location that is not on Benton County property and always dispose of waste in the proper receptacles.

Can I smoke in my car on the Property?

Benton County expects that all employees, volunteers, interns, clients, visitors and vendors to not use tobacco products indoors or outdoors at all times while they are on Benton County property.

How can I maintain my nicotine cravings while on Benton County property?

Please come prepared with your own nicotine replacement therapies to help manage your cravings while on Benton County property. These products include the nicotine patch, gum, lozenge, inhaler and nasal spray as well as a number of prescription medications. The use of electronic cigarettes is not allowed on Benton County property.

Other than nicotine replacement therapy, there are techniques you can use to help cope with your cravings while on Benton County property. When a craving hits, it is helpful to find a mental distraction until the feeling passes. Going for a walk, drinking water or having a healthy snack with you to munch on can help with this.

If you are ready to quit tobacco, or would like to talk with someone about how to manage your cravings while in a tobacco-free environment, contact the Oregon Tobacco Quit Line at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669) or in Español 1-877-DEJELO-YA (1-877-335356-92) You may be eligible for free nicotine patches or gum.

How will this policy be enforced?

All members of the Benton County Community are responsible for adherence to the tobacco-free property policy. County employees will assist in maintaining a tobacco-free environment by helping to inform and remind volunteers, interns, clients, visitors and vendors that tobacco use is not allowed on Benton County property.

Are there resources to help me quit smoking or using tobacco?

Offering resources to quit tobacco for employees and visitors is an integral component of a tobacco-free policy.

If you are an employee or dependent covered by Benton County health benefits, you can find out more information about tobacco cessation benefits by going to the Human Resources Employee Wellness page on The BEE.

If you are a client or visitor, you can receive free help to quit tobacco from the Oregon Tobacco Quit Line at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669) or in Español at 1-855-DEJELO-YA (1-877-266-3863). You may be eligible for free nicotine patches or gum.

Who can I contact if I have concerns or questions?

If you have questions, please contact the Benton County Tobacco Prevention & Education Coordinator at (541) 766-2101.