



INFORMATION UPDATE

Your questions answered: Staff Award Breaks

All Hunter New England Health grounds, car parks, buildings and vehicles are now completely smoke-free. Visitors, patients and staff wanting to smoke must leave the health service grounds. The Smoke-free Health Service policy aims to provide totally smoke-free health care facilities and campuses.

1. Where and when are staff members permitted to smoke?

Staff members who wish to smoke while at work must only do so during award rest breaks (morning tea, afternoon tea, lunch and dinner). Smokers are expected to smoke outside the perimeter of the Hunter New England Health premises.

2. What if something happens to a staff member while smoking beyond the boundary of HNE Health premises?

Any person who suffers an injury arising out of, or in the course of, employment may be entitled to compensation. If the health facility actively encourages employees to cease smoking and prohibits smoking breaks and subsequently an employee is injured while on an unauthorised smoking break (as distinct from a lunch break), it may not be considered an injury arising out of, or in the course of, employment and therefore outside the scope of workers compensation.

3. I am required to remain "on-call" during a meal break, can I leave the premises to smoke beyond the boundary?

Staff who are required to remain 'on-call' during a meal break may be required to remain on the premises due to the requirements of their position and the specific needs of the work unit at that time and may by necessity preclude them from leaving the site to have a cigarette.

All staff need to ensure that they inform their supervisor of their whereabouts while on duty and this includes seeking permission to leave the site for whatever reason.

Smoke-free Health Service policy – information for staff

ISSUED: December 2006

4. Can I split my 30-minute meal break into 3x10 minute breaks throughout the day to help me manage my nicotine dependency?

No – the majority of Awards are specific in that each employee must have a break of at least 30 minutes for each meal break that occurs while on duty.

5. What if an employee does not comply with the smoke-free policy?

Employees are required to comply with the smoke-free policy. Supervisors and managers are responsible for ensuring that the policy is implemented. If an employee breaches the smoke-free policy, informal counselling should be undertaken in the first instance. If the employee continues to breach the policy then formal corrective counselling should be undertaken.

For help to quit smoking contact:

- **NSW Quitline on 131 848 for full counselling service available 24 hours or to get a copy of the Quit kit.**
- Hunter New England Health's Alcohol and Other Drug Service. Call 1300 660 059 (New England region) or (02) 4923 2060 (Hunter and Mid North Coast regions).

Got a question?

Email the Smoke-free project officers on smokefree@hnehealth.nsw.gov.au.

More information can be found on the Smoke-free Health Service site on the intranet.