

## New year ushers in end to smoking freedom



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Far-reaching anti-smoking legislation comes into effect on January 1, outlawing smoking in public spaces, including the workplace, bars and restaurants. Smoking in these venues will be allowed only in sealed smoking rooms with separate ventilation systems.

The department of health says it has received many applications from companies wanting an extension to the January deadline, when they will be legally required to have formal smoking policies in place.

The Tobacco Products Control Amendment Act stipulates that companies and organisations provide smoking rooms that are sealed off from all other public places by a concrete wall or solid partitions. It must be no larger than a quarter of the total floor space and the room must have a separate ventilation system.

The Liberty Group head office in Johannesburg is a smoke-free building, and has been for the past five years. The company believes it is ready for the new year deadline. The group's human resources executive, Craig Lawrence, says the company has built smoking rooms and designated smoking areas.

For the hospitality industry the new legislation is still more onerous than is the case with private companies. Compliance with the legislation could mean a drop in customers. Chief executive of the Mugg and Bean restaurant chain, Ben Filmalter, says they are adopting a wait-and-see policy. He says many of their outlets are already in compliance, but the company is not going all out to bring every outlet up to standard.

The stringent tobacco law is in part meant to reduce the incidence of tobacco-related illness.

Smokers no doubt agree the legislation is a drag: those caught lighting up outside designated areas will be fined R200 if caught. - SABC