

Smokers will find it harder to have their fix, easier to quit

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SMOKERS will soon face tough new restrictions after Parliament passed a Bill this week dictating where and with whom they could smoke.

While there will be some degree of policing, the health department has said the new legislation will largely be self-regulatory – with the onus on smokers themselves to monitor where they puff or stub out.

But anti-smoking bodies and restaurant associations predict few teething problems with the new legislation, saying smokers have, for the most part, complied with past restrictions.

The Tobacco Products Control Amendment Bill was approved by the National Council of Provinces on Thursday, and is expected to be signed into law by President Thabo Mbeki by early next year.

The law will make it illegal to smoke in a car with a child under 12, or to take a child under 18 into the smoking area of a restaurant or pub.

Smoking is forbidden in any home that offers commercial services for children. The Bill also bans smoking in sports stadiums, in partly enclosed public spaces, such as restaurant patios, in mini-bus taxis, on trains and on passenger ships or boats.

The fine for restaurants, pubs and workplaces that allow smoking outside of approved areas will be increased from R200 to a maximum of R50 000.

Cigarette manufacturers will also have to provide the health department with more detailed information about the content and effects of their products – or face fines of up to R1-million.

Yusuf Saloojee, executive director of the National Council against Smoking, said the organisation welcomed the tougher legislation.

“It will make sure young people are less easily targeted by the tobacco industry, it will make it easier for smokers to quit, and it will protect the health of non-smokers.

“At the moment, cigarette companies can put what they like into tobacco products.”

Saloojee commended the country’s tobacco control laws, saying smoking had decreased from 35 per cent of adults in 1995 to 23% now.

Restaurant Association of SA chief executive Wendy Alberts said the organisation would assist all its member restaurants to make changes where necessary.

Health department spokesman Bennett Asia said environmental health practitioners would enforce the regulations where necessary.