Common Misconceptions About Workplace Smoking

Misconceptions can be harmful. Let's get the conversation straight about smoking in the workplace.

❌ **A designated smoking area will suffice instead of going 100% smoke-free.**

✅ No. Having smoking areas means that workers and visitors are still exposed to second-hand smoke and its risks. The only way to eliminate the hazards of tobacco smoke is through implementing a 100% smoke-free policy.

❌ **A smoke-free policy will cause businesses to lose customers.**

✅ No. The global data overwhelmingly confirm that going smoke-free does not harm businesses. In fact, for some industries, sales improve after going smoke-free.

❌ **A ventilation system protects workers from second-hand smoke.**

✅ No. Even the most advanced ventilation system cannot eliminate tobacco smoke or the risks from second-hand smoke. Only 100% smoke-free environments are effective in eliminating health risks associated with exposure to second-hand smoke.

❌ **A smoke-free policy will not gain support from employees.**

✅ Not true. Most smokers support smoke-free policies after they have experienced a smoke-free environment.

❌ **A national smoke-free law is required before implementing a smoke-free office policy.**

✅ No. All countries mandate employers to provide a safe workplace to workers, and tobacco smoke is a major health hazard. In several countries, smoke-free workplaces have preceded national law and led the way for healthier policy.

Photo: WHO/Yoshi Shimizu

World Health Organization
Western Pacific Region

❌ Implementing a smoke-free policy will cost the businesses money.

✅ Not true. Implementing a smoke-free policy is not costly. In fact, it will save businesses thousands of dollars in health and fire insurance and cleaning costs.

Moreover, all the materials needed to implement a smoke-free policy are provided in **www.revolutionsmokefree.org** for free.

❌ A smoke-free policy is discriminatory to employees who smoke.

✅ A smoke-free workplace policy is intended to protect both nonsmokers and smokers. It doesn't mean that smokers are being judged negatively or are unwelcome. In fact, the best type of smoke-free workplace policy also includes provisions to help employees who use tobacco to quit tobacco use completely. This maximizes the health benefits to the employees as well as the productivity and cost savings to the business.

❌ Second-hand smoke is not a threat to our health.

✅ No. Many people know about the dangers of smoking, but second-hand smoke can cause many of the same problems, including lung cancer, heart disease, bronchitis, lung and airway infections and exacerbated asthma symptoms. Exposure to tobacco smoke in the workplace increases a nonsmoker's risk of lung cancer by as much as 19 percent.

❌ Smoking in the workplace does not harm businesses.

✅ The time workers spend smoking adds up to several days out of each year, and costs of cleaning, fire insurance and health insurance are significant – all of which will go down with a smoke-free policy in place.

Photo: WHO/Yoshi Shimizu
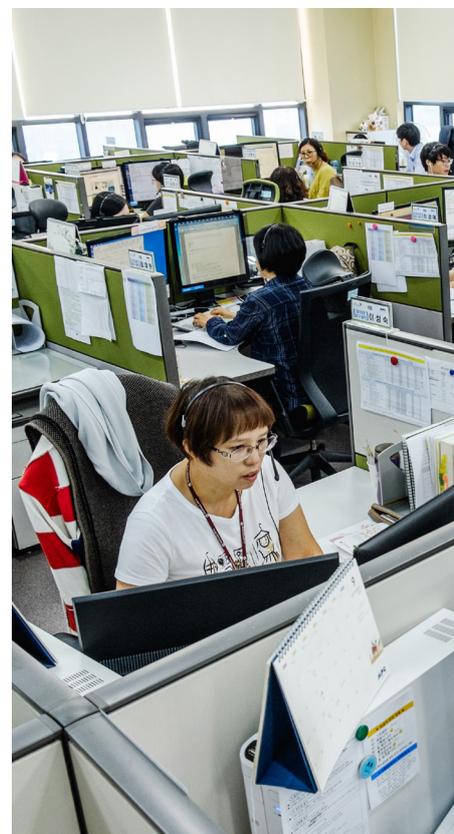
Sources:

The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Second-hand Smoke: A Report of the Surgeon General.

Environmental Tobacco Smoke Position Document. Reductions in tobacco smoke pollution and increases in support for smoke-free public places following the implementation of comprehensive smoke-free workplace legislation in the Republic of Ireland: Findings from the ITC Ireland/UK survey.

CDC Health Effects of Second-hand Smoke.

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