

Press Release on Smoke-Free Cars Legislation

In a moving car, the level of secondhand smoke produced by a single cigarette can be as high as 7 times the average of a smoky bar .

New legislation will come into force on 1st January 2017 making it illegal to smoke in private cars in the presence of children under 16 years of age. This measure is being taken in order to protect children from the dangers of secondhand smoke.

In Malta smoking was already restricted in all enclosed public spaces in April 2004 and this new legislation will continue to build on the drive to protect the public from second hand smoke

There is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke. Exposing minors to second hand smoke in the confined space of a car is extremely hazardous. A single cigarette smoked in a stationery car with its windows closed can produce a level of secondhand smoke 11 times higher than that found in an average bar where smoking is permitted. In a moving car, the level of secondhand smoke produced by a single cigarette can be as high as 7 times the average of a smoky bar .

In addition, the gaseous and particulate components of tobacco smoke are absorbed into the upholstery and other surfaces inside a car, and are then released back into the air over the course of many days, exposing passengers to toxins long after anyone actually smoked in the car.

Children are still developing physically and are therefore more susceptible to the harmful effects of secondhand smoke. They are a vulnerable group who cannot decide for themselves and are dependent on the actions of their parents and guardians.

This legislation will follow in the footsteps of many other European countries that have already introduced it.

This ban will apply to all tobacco products including e cigarettes. The driver of the car will always be held responsible and any passenger caught smoking in a car in the presence of minors will also be liable to a fine of 50 Euros.

Smoking in cars is to be discouraged. This legislative measure protects children and young people from the damaging effects of secondhand smoke, which can put them at risk of serious conditions such as meningitis, cancer, bronchitis and pneumonia, and make asthma worse.

As part of its remit to promote a smoke free society, the Health Promotion and Disease Directorate in collaboration with the Primary Health Care Department provides free one-to-one counselling services for persons who want to quit smoking. These sessions are available every Wednesday evening at Floriana and Mosta Health Centre. Smoking cessation programmes are also provided for employees at their place of work. This five week educational programme is delivered by trained health professionals who help employees to develop the skills to set a quit date and quit smoking within a supportive environment. For further information, please contact the Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Directorate on 23266000 or health.pro@gov.mt.

Further information on enforcement can be obtained from the Environmental Health Directorate on 21322306 or 21337333. E-mail: mhi@gov.mt

NB. For a soft copy of the campaign's logo and the official poster, kindly send an email to Tanya Borg on tanya.borg@gov.mt