



## San Juan County Tobacco Prevention Program News Release

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### **Tobacco Costs to Employers and Employees**

There are many reasons that people quit smoking. Some can quit just because they learn about the dangers of tobacco, or because they have a health scare. Increasingly, tobacco use has become a workplace issue: in the recent past, the desire to protect workers from second hand smoke resulted in a new state law that banned smoking in, and within 25 feet of any building.

More employers consider the financial cost of smoking employees, as they look to save on health care costs, and elsewhere. Here are some issues and facts from the Center for Disease Control, [www.workingsmokefree.com](http://www.workingsmokefree.com), and the American Cancer Society.

#### **Insurance Coverage Costs**

- Smoking employees cost employers an average of \$1429 per smoker per year in increased health care costs over nonsmoking employees, not counting lost productivity and absenteeism.

#### **Lost Productivity and Absenteeism**

- Full time employees who take four 10-minute smoking breaks a day actually work *one month less per year* than workers who don't take smoking breaks.
- The absentee rate for smokers from work is 33-50% higher than for nonsmokers.
- Smokers are 50% more likely to be hospitalized.
- Smokers cost more in hospital and outpatient costs per claim.
- Smokers have 15% higher disability rates than nonsmokers.

#### **Property Costs**

- Many insurance companies now give discounts on property insurance for companies that do not allow smoking. Decreased incidence in fires, damage, accidents, and cleaning costs all contribute to this.

Although most employers try to use positive incentives to help employees quit, increasingly, employers now use policies that enable them to hire nonsmokers only. Some have given employees a deadline to quit, and have terminated those who have not.

So, if you are still using tobacco and have not found a reason to quit, here is another one. There are new treatments and medicines that can help. In addition: starting July 1, DSHS recipients can receive benefits for treatments not previously covered. Call your health care provider, or the Washington state Quitline at 877-270-STOP, or 1-877-2NO-FUME.

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