

No Smoking in Public Places as of July 15

As of Monday, July 15, smoking in public places will be banned, Minister of Health, Hon. Dr. Fenton Ferguson, announced on June 25.

“Come July 15, no longer will our workers and children have to involuntarily inhale tobacco smoke, with its over 40 carcinogens,” the Minister emphasised. Dr. Ferguson was making his contribution to the 2013/2014 Sectoral Debate in the House of Representatives. The decision on the ban was made by the Minister, who exercised his powers under the Public Health Act, and with the approval of Cabinet. This has resulted in the implementation of the Public Health (Tobacco Control) Regulations 2013.

The Regulations outline places where smoking is prohibited, such as all enclosed places, public transportation, workplaces, government buildings, health facilities; sport, athletic and recreational facilities for use by the public; educational institutions; areas specifically for use by children, and places of collective use, such as bus stops. They also require the use of large, graphic health warnings on tobacco products, instead of the text only warnings currently used. This will be effective within six months. “The measure is expected to reduce the number of children who begin smoking and increase the number of smokers who will quit,” Dr. Ferguson said. In addition, the Regulations include requirements for tobacco product disclosures, which will enhance the Government’s capacity to monitor the extent of the tobacco epidemic and produce the data needed to inform further tobacco control measures.

The 2010 Global Youth Tobacco Survey undertaken by the National Council on Drug Abuse indicates that just over 40 per cent of young persons aged 13 to 15 years have smoked at least once, and alarmingly, over 19 per cent of those who have ever smoked started under the age of 10 years. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) statistics, tobacco kills up to half of its users and kills nearly six million people each year, including more than 600,000 non-smokers exposed to second hand smoke. The statistics also show that across the globe, every six seconds someone dies from tobacco related illness; one in 10 adults every year dies because of tobacco; and nearly 80 per cent of the world’s one billion smokers live in low and middle income countries like Jamaica. Jamaicans.com