

Smoking ban starts today in Jamaica

Effective today, July 15th, people who breach new regulations making smoking in public spaces unlawful could be fined up to \$500,000 or imprisonment of six months.

The ban was announced last month by Minister of Health, Dr Fenton Ferguson, during his contribution to the sectoral debate in Gordon House. The Ministry of Health's legal officer, Sheryl Dennis, has said the penalties would be applied to owners, managers and leasees of premises where breaches of the regulations occur. She says persons could be fined up to \$50,000 or sentenced to a prison term of three months for a first offence. But fines could be more than doubled for a second offence. Ferguson has said he would not be daunted by naysayers, who are against the ban on smoking in workplaces and public places. Critics of the new legislation have said the term 'public space' has not been properly defined and note that the time frame for its implementation was too short. The regulations were announced by the health minister on June 25.