

Global Smokefree Partnership

Record compliance with smoking ban
2009-06-24

By Charlie Taylor

Compliance with the workplace smoking ban reached an all-time high in 2008, according to the Office of Tobacco Control's (OTC) annual report, which was published today.

Last year, 97 per cent of workplaces were compliant with the ban, the highest level of annual compliance since the introduction of the ban in 2004.

A total of 25,350 inspections were carried out in workplaces around the country by environmental health officers in 2008.

Twenty-four cases were brought under the Public Health (Tobacco) Acts resulting in 19 convictions. In addition, 23 cases were taken for failure to comply with the sales to minors legislation, result in 19 convictions.

A total of 562 calls were made to the smoke-free compliance line, the

report shows.

The OTC's chief executive Éamonn Rossi, said the high compliance rate and showed the strong public support for measures to protect the public from the serious ill effects of smoking.

"Five years after its introduction, we are delighted with how workplaces and the public continue to support this public health measure. The introduction of the legislation can without doubt be called a success and we must now carry that success forward and continue to be a world leader in tobacco control," he said.

Mr Rossi said he believes the removal of point of sale advertising next month will prove to be as significant a move as the introduction of the smoke-free legislation in 2004.

From July 1st no advertising or display of tobacco products will be permitted in retail outlets and self-service vending machines will be permitted in licensed premises or registered clubs only.

Global Smokefree Partnership

According to a survey carried out by the OTC last year, 80 per cent of people support a complete ban on all tobacco advertising in stores to prevent children and young adults from starting to smoke

"The imminent removal of retail tobacco advertising and product display is key to the goal of reducing the numbers of young people starting to smoke," said Mr Rossi.

"Instore advertising and extensive product displays helps tobacco to appear as a familiar, acceptable and normal retail product. This situation contributes to the belief common among youth that "everyone" smokes. As a result, research shows that children are more likely to start smoking themselves," he added.

The National Federation of Retail Newsagents (NFRN) has questioned the OTC's findings that removal of point of sale advertising will lead to a decrease in underage smoking.

The organisation called for a stricter policing of tobacco smuggling laws.

Global Smokefree Partnership

"The Government and the OTC should focus their attention on clamping down on illegal trade, it is here that all Government health warnings are being ignored and bypassed, said NRFN district president Martin Mulligan.

"(The) Government and the OTC should look at implementing plans at reducing black market activity. This will not be achieved through legislation like the one that is being introduced here from July 1st," he added.

In addition to the removal of point of sale advertising next month, there will be further provisions of the Public Health (Tobacco) Acts commencing in July including the introduction of a national register of tobacco retailers and tighter controls on the location and operation of tobacco vending machines.

Source: The Irish Times