

## **L.A. Times**

### **Santa Monica bans e-cigarettes in public places**

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Santa Monica became the latest city to strictly regulate where e-cigarettes can be smoked, banning their use in most public places.

On Tuesday, the City Council voted unanimously to enact tough restrictions on the devices, essentially treating them like regular cigarettes. Santa Monica joins other cities that passed similar measures earlier this year, including Los Angeles, Long Beach and Beverly Hills.

The decision came after months of discussion about the safety of e-cigarettes for former smokers and others.

Although supporters of "vaping" argue that they have helped people quit smoking and are a safe alternative to regular cigarettes, critics say that they target young people and could be a gateway to increased smoking among youths.

"There is no clear evidence that these devices are safe, despite there being a lot of studies," said Adam Radinsky, head of the city's Consumer Protection Unit.

The new ordinance will take effect Nov. 14, when e-cigarettes will be banned in public places and vapor retailers will have to obtain a tobacco license. "There seems to be growing evidence that they have health risks and some serious problems."

Radinsky says that the city is also concerned about e-cigarettes' potential popularity among children and said allowing the devices made it harder for the city to effectively enforce its smoke-free laws when, from a distance, e-cigarettes and traditional cigarettes look similar.

Santa Monica's new ordinance essentially treats "vaping" as smoking. The sale of e-cigarettes to minors will be prohibited, retailers will have to obtain a tobacco license and vapor bars will also have to prohibit in-store smoking, though that rule will not apply to the city's two current vapor bars, Fix Vapor on Main Street and Vapor Delight on Lincoln Boulevard.

Despite the exemption, Vapor Delight's owners said they are still concerned, Bearing the brunt of this new ordinance will be those who have successfully quit

smoking by using vapor cigarettes that don't contain tobacco, they say.

"Vaping is not smoking," said Omar Abaza, 30, who with his cousins Dean Ascar and Ashraf Spahi owns Vapor Delight.

E-cigarettes are seen as an alternative to smoking because they allow users to adjust nicotine intake as they wean themselves from it. The nicotine levels in vapor cigarettes range from 0 to 24, in increments of 3. A 24 level of nicotine is equivalent to that of a cigar, Abaza said.

"Now they're going to be forced to sit along with those cigarette smokers again and be included and get secondhand smoke," Abaza said of those who quit smoking through the use of vapor cigarettes. "It's futile to quit, but yet have to be grouped with the people still smoking."

In March, Long Beach passed one of the strictest laws in the state on e-cigarettes, classifying them as tobacco products, banning their sale to those younger than 18 and subjecting vendors to inspections and potential sting operations by the city's Health Department.

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<http://www.latimes.com/local/westside/la-me-santa-monica-cigarettes-20141016-story.html>