

National Cancer Institute (NCI) Smoke-free Meetings Policy

Rationale for the Policy:

Environmental Tobacco Smoke (ETS), also known as secondhand smoke, passive smoking, and involuntary tobacco smoke, is an important preventable cause of illness and death. ETS causes lung cancer and heart disease in adult nonsmokers; serious illnesses such as bronchitis and pneumonia in infants and young children; and reduced birth weight and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) in infants of nonsmoking women. While the nation has made tremendous progress in reducing ETS exposure, many adults and children remain at risk.

Smoke-free laws benefit nonsmokers by eliminating exposure to ETS, and smokers by providing an environment that encourages and facilitates quitting. After careful consideration, the NCI Executive Committee decided that, effective January 1, 2007, NCI shall convene meetings only in smoke-free jurisdictions.

The NCI Smoke-free Meeting Policy states:

NCI recognizes that ETS is an important preventable cause of death from cancer and other illnesses, and that many Americans, both adults and children, remain at significant risk from ETS exposure. In order to reduce cancer and other serious health hazards caused by ETS exposure, all meetings and conferences organized and/or sponsored by NCI shall be held in a town, city, county, or state that is smoke-free, unless specific circumstances justify an exception from this policy.

Meetings Affected by the Policy:

The new policy addresses meetings and conferences primarily organized or sponsored by NCI that involve 20 or more attendees.

Exceptions to the Policy:

The following are exempted from the policy:

- conference grants and other grantee-sponsored meetings
- NCI meetings or conferences in coordination with another meeting or conference that is not sponsored by NCI, taking place in a jurisdiction that is not yet smoke-free
- site visits at an NCI-supported institution (e.g., an NCI-designated Cancer Center or other grantee) located in a jurisdiction that is not yet smoke-free
- meetings in close proximity to a special population group (e.g., a Tribal community) located in a specific region that is not yet smoke-free
- meetings held on NCI campuses
- requirements of the Competition in Contracting Act (41 U.S.C. sec. 253)
- requirements of the Federal Travel Regulations (41 U.S.C. sec. 301)

Staff do not need to obtain permission to use one of the above-noted exemptions.

Policy Effective Date:

The policy took effect January 1, 2007.