

# Dare County Residents & Visitors Enjoy "Vapor-Free" Restaurants and Bars

Lisa Phillips

## Summary

Dare County is proud to be the first county in NC to prohibit the use of electronic cigarettes in all restaurants and bars. Due to collaborative efforts by county and municipal governments and the local restaurant association, the owners of almost 200 restaurants and bars now provide a healthier and safer working environment for their employees and positive role modeling for youth. Electronic cigarette aerosol is not harmless "water vapor" and is not as safe as clean air, and is especially harmful to pregnant women and children.

## Challenge

With electronic cigarettes growing in popularity, and knowledge of the health hazards of their aerosol, commonly called "vapor," NC restaurants and bars may compromise their clean air and healthy working environments if they allow their use. The National Institute for Occupational Safety & Health (NIOSH) recommends employers "establish and maintain smoke-free workplaces that protect those in workplaces from involuntary, secondhand smoke exposures to tobacco smoke and airborne emissions from electronic cigarettes and other electronic nicotine delivery systems".<sup>1</sup>

NC's Smoke-Free Restaurants and Bars law, passed in 2009, did not address electronic cigarettes, but gave local governments the authority to prohibit smoking and tobacco use in government buildings, grounds, and public places.

## Solution

With the growing evidence related to the use of electronic cigarettes, the Dare County Health and Human Services (DCHHS) Board decided it was time to take a stand in response to public health concerns. The Board discussed prohibiting the use of electronic cigarettes at restaurants and bars. Local boards of public health have the authority to adopt rules that are necessary to protect and promote public health. A board of health rule is valid throughout the county or counties in the board's jurisdiction, including within any municipalities served by the board. Also, local governments can pass such regulations under their basic authority to protect the health and welfare of the community.



## Your Involvement is Key

**Smoke-free protections keep the air fresh and clean for everyone. Find out if your community has a smoke-free protection in place for its local government buildings, parks, playgrounds, recreational facilities, or public places in North Carolina. If they do not, get involved with your Regional Tobacco Free Coalition.**

**For information visit: [www.tobaccopreventionandcontrol.ncdhhs.gov](http://www.tobaccopreventionandcontrol.ncdhhs.gov) or [www.healthync.org](http://www.healthync.org)**

## Results

On June 16, 2015 the DCHHS Board voted unanimously to prohibit the use of ENDS products, electronic cigarettes, and similar devices in all restaurants and bars in Dare County. This was a public health decision to protect the health and welfare of employees working in the restaurant and bar industry. Dare County is home to The Outer Banks and Hatteras Island and is a popular family vacation destination with many residents working full and part-time in the hospitality industry. It is fitting that Dare County provided the leadership and became the first of all 100 counties in North Carolina to put this protection in place.

### Contact

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*"I am pleased the Dare County Board of Health & Human Services was a leader to help mitigate the threat to public health by adopting a rule to prohibit the use of electronic cigarettes in restaurants and bars. It has been a success in its first year."*

**- Sheila Davies, PhD - Public Health Director**

## Sustainable Success

It has been just over one year since the rule went into effect and it has largely been met with approval. For many of our public buildings, non-tobacco use is becoming the norm and this Rule meets resident and visitor expectations. Allowing electronic cigarette use in buildings with smoke-free protections creates confusion and the effectiveness of these policies can be compromised. To sustain tobacco-free norms, electronic cigarettes should not be used any place where smoking cigarettes is not allowed. A public awareness campaign, including table tents and decals, continues to educate restaurant and bar patrons and promote compliance.

1 [www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2015-113/pdfs/fy15\\_cib-67\\_2015-113\\_v3.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2015-113/pdfs/fy15_cib-67_2015-113_v3.pdf)