

Spot a public smoker, dial 1800 and complain

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FOUR months after the Centre enforced a national law prohibiting smoking in public places, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) — along with the help of Tata Memorial Hospital, Healis Sekhsaria Institute of Public Health and several other NGOs — is setting up a toll-free helpline number, 1800, to help victims of passive

smoking in public places.

The helpline will be operational in two weeks. "Passive smoking is more dangerous and it happens in every public place. So it is important that we give serious thought to curbing the problem. Since the civic body is the guardian of public health, it is only natural that they implement this action," said professor and head of the department of preventive oncology, Dr Surendra Shashtri, Tata Memorial Hospital.

According to a survey commissioned by Healis Sekhsaria Institute for Public Health, over 98 per cent of people want a smoke-free Mumbai.

To further strengthen the crusade against public smoking, the civic body will soon set up a "smoke-free Mumbai" cell that will be responsible for the effective implementation of the smoke-free law. "We will take every step possible to ensure that passive smoking is curbed in public places. Earlier too, we

had propagated several messages and ways, but it was difficult to regularise restaurants and pubs through appeals. Now since we have a government order, we can work effectively, this cell will help us in doing so," said BMC's executive health officer Dr Jairaj Thanekar.

The civic body has also roped in Action Council against Tobacco (ACT) to develop a website, www.smokefreemumbai.org, to ensure citizens' participa-

tion in implementing the law. "The website is to spread awareness about the law. Also with the help of this website, citizens can report violations from where law can take over. This way we can ensure effective implementation," said Dr Shastri. The city will soon host the 14th World Conference on Tobacco and Health from March 8 to 12 at the NCPA. Around 61 countries are expected to participate in the conference.

LETHAL PUFF



City People favouring smoke-free Act

Mumbai	98 %
Delhi	90 %
Chennai	92 %
Kolkatta	93 %

92 % found passive smoking a hazard
91 % said being exposed to smoking bothered them