

McMenamins Hotel Oregon Goes Completely Tobacco-Free

A Success Story

Established in 1905, McMenamins Hotel Oregon is a charming destination in the heart of Oregon's wine country. It houses 42 European-style lodging guestroom, 3 pubs and bars, and hosts a calendar of events and live musical entertainment. Hotel Oregon has also graciously hosted the 2nd largest UFO festival in the U.S. for the last 15 years in celebration of a UFO sighting in McMinnville in 1950. Hotel Oregon often hosts weddings, business parties, and other large event along with casual dining and drinks for families and friends.

The Challenge:

Oregon's beautiful summers bring sunshine and pleasant temperatures perfect for enjoying a meal outside. McMenamins Hotel Oregon provides a great venue for this with a total of 34 outdoor tables on their rooftop, patios, and along the sidewalks of Third and Evans Streets. However, as is common with outdoor dining, tobacco has been used at these tables and in the outdoor areas of the building. Secondhand smoke invaded the breathing space of other outdoor guests, employees, and even those inside when windows or doors were open.

While the Indoor Clean Air Act (ICAA) works to protect people inside the building from secondhand tobacco smoke, it does little to protect those who would like to enjoy fresh air while dining. This is particularly hard on families with children, health conscious individuals, those who have recently quit smoking, those who have compromised respiratory or immune systems, or allergies and asthma. In fact, Hotel Oregon found that smoke from those observing the 10 foot rule still made its way into the dining space inside the restaurant.

Guests became frustrated with being forced to breathe smoke while they and their families dined. Several individuals voiced their concerns to the staff about the smoke and asked to be moved to a different part of the restaurant, though the smoke still carried through.

Tobacco also posed other problems for the establishment. The rooftop use of tobacco led to burns producing leaks in the roof. This allowed water to enter several of the rooms causing damages. Hotel Oregon was forced to close these rooms for a short period of time resulting in unnecessary repair costs for the establishment and a loss in profit on the rooms required to be closed.

Additionally, some individuals would continually use tobacco and loiter at the corner of Third and Evans Streets. These individuals were not guests at Hotel Oregon but their behavior was disruptive to those who were. When asked to move on by staff, these individuals often became confrontational which resulted in staff once calling police to assist.

Solution:

In the fall of 2012, Kris McMillan, Hotel Oregon manager began working with Jennifer Johnson, Yamhill County Tobacco Prevention Coordinator (TPEP) to identify ways to keep customers satisfied while reducing costs. Johnson was able to provide research into the emerging field of tobacco-free outdoor dining, resources for restaurants, and policy language.

As partners, they developed a policy that stated as of January 1st, 2013, McMenamins Hotel Oregon would be tobacco-free. This included all forms of tobacco and nicotine including e-cigarettes but excluding FDA approved nicotine replacement therapies. The policy covered inside the restaurant, on the roof top, and within 30 feet of doors and windows. Because staff are not allowed to leave the establishment grounds during their shift, management allow a designated smoking section behind the restaurant out of sight of

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guests and community members. McMillan and Johnson also developed talking points to assist in staff enforcement.

McMillan presented the new policy at a staff meeting, describing the new expectations and talking points, and attaining signatures from each staff member. The policy has been added as an addendum to the current McMenamins handbook for Hotel Oregon staff and new employees will receive and sign this policy like all other policies.

Results:

Johnson interviewed McMillan at 6 months to evaluate the new policy and to determine further assistance needed. Some of the highlights identified include:

- Overall, there has been no change in attendance of guests or economic impact, including tips.
- Staff held personal conversations with regulars about the new policy and expectations. These conversations went mostly well and regulars are getting use to the new policy over time.
- After being informed of the new policy, the confrontational individuals are not loitering at the corner of Third and Evans Streets nearly as much.
- When informed of the new policy, most customers just say they didn't know about it and discontinue using.
- Behavior norms among the regulars are changing. One even has fun with it and says, "Alright Boss, I'm walking" when he sees McMillan on his way out for a walking smoke break.
- Signs are posted on the rooftop and on the hotel website as guests book their room. Hotel front desk employees verbally inform all guests of this policy as they check in.
- As time goes on, staff are having to inform and remind guests of the policy less and less and are becoming more comfortable doing so.
- One staff member has attempted quitting tobacco since last year.

Some of the challenges include:

- Staff were uncomfortable enforcing the policy the first several months as it took some time to develop confidence and the proper verbiage. Managers were available any time a staff member did not feel comfortable discussing the policy with a guest.
- Have had one or two guests choose to leave because of the policy.
- Because staff are not allowed to leave the grounds during their shift, they use tobacco in a designated place behind the building.

McMillan and Johnson have agreed to continue to partner in providing technical support for other restaurants or establishments interested in implementing a tobacco-free policy. They will present the policy and talking points offering technical assistance to the McMinnville Downtown Association Fall 2013.

Implementation Provider:

The Tobacco Prevention and Education Program allows for a TPEP Coordinator to be in each County or region. For businesses interested in partnering with this program to adopt a tobacco or smokefree policy, you can find the coordinator in your area at:

<https://partners.health.oregon.gov/Partners/HPCDPCConnection/Documents/contractorsgrantees.xlsx>

For help quitting tobacco, you may contact the Oregon Tobacco Quit Line at 1-800-QUIT-NOW or www.quitnow.net/oregon.

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