

LMC tightens smoking policy

Starting June 1, smokers must remain in their vehicles

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BENTON TWP. — Starting on June 1, if you want to light up anywhere around Lake Michigan College's campuses, you'll have to do it in your own car — or find a way to kick the habit.

The new language represents a significant tightening of past practice that restricted smoking to within 20 feet of an entrance, according to LMC President Bob Harrison.

"In this case, we're modifying an existing policy. Now, we're saying that you can't smoke anywhere, except in your personal vehicle," Harrison said.

Harrison cited two major reasons for changing the policy, which LMC board members endorsed last month. One major push came from the Student Senate, which asked the college administration

to review the matter, he said.

"When we were doing the Student Activity Center (project), the Student Senate asked us to consider banning smoking up on the plaza. They said, 'If you really would like to, we'd like you to ban smoking entirely,'" he said.

That request, in turn, led to a review of community colleges' smoking policies statewide. About 20 institutions either ban smoking entirely, or limit the practice to vehicles, as LMC has just done, Harrison said.

Enforcement of the policy will essentially fall on any employee who sees somebody lighting up, according to Harrison.

Harrison said consequences for violating the policy will not be severe to begin with.

"If we see someone smoking, we'll ask them to put it out. It will be part of the college rules — so, yes, they (employees) could be (disciplined). But

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we have no reason to expect anything other than cooperation from our

employees, students, and visitors to the campus."

The college is preparing to offer smoking cessation classes for employees — which it hopes to roll out by the June 1

deadline, Harrison said.

"We have a very robust educational series planned. The implementation date's not until June, so we've got time to work on it," Harrison

said. "We wouldn't do it (the policy change) without making an investment in helping people change their habit. There's been a big discussion about it."