

## Putting out the cigarettes

Workplace anti-smoking policies becoming common in Massachusetts; restrictions in effect at 36 percent of all US companies

By David Mehegan  
Globe Staff

**W**ALTHAM - Amy White, a personnel officer at Cabot Corp., tried last week to say what she would do when her time runs out. She has 11½ months left.

"What's more important?" she asked. "Smoking or having a job I like? It's not reason enough to quit. I'll try to quit altogether, but something tells me I'll end up not smoking at the office."

The crisis Amy White and the other smokers at Cabot are facing is cropping up all over America as a growing number of companies put antismoking policies into effect.

Several Massachusetts companies have sharply restricted smoking in the workplace within the last year. Besides Cabot, an industrial manufacturer in the energy and chemical fields, local companies cracking down on smoking include Boston

Gas, Texas Instruments, AT & T, Stride Rite and Index Systems.

A 1986 survey cited in the surgeon general's December report to Congress reports 36 percent of US companies had antismoking policies in effect, with 23 percent considering them. The survey found that only 8 percent restricted smoking in 1981.

Cabot's policy is among the toughest. In a pilot program to be applied later to the company's offices worldwide, workers at the Waltham headquarters were told last September they could smoke only in a corner of the cafeteria, private offices or in common work areas where formal permission is given by nonsmokers. Starting Jan. 1, 1988, smoking will be banned completely.

The business trend parallels legal trends. Sixteen states passed laws restricting public smoking between 1980 and 1985. In Massachusetts, Cambridge last year joined Newton in banning smoking in private worksites and most public buildings, and the Dukakis administration is ironing out details on an antismoking policy in state offices.

"There has been increasing interest among large corporations to do something about smoking among employees," said John Pinney, director of the Institute for the Study of Smoking Behavior and Policy at the Kennedy School of Government.

"There was already definitely a trend," said Pinney, "and the Koop report will add enormous impetus because it establishes the rationale for corporate liability. Tobacco is a dangerous substance, and an employer who doesn't do anything is liable to be sued."

Surgeon General C. Everett Koop's report, "The Health Consequences of Involuntary Smoking," has two conclusions with implications for business. First, cigarette smoke causes disease, including lung cancer, in healthy nonsmokers. Second, simple separation of smokers and nonsmokers does not eliminate exposure of nonsmokers.

"For us the impetus was the evidence that passive smoking was a health hazard," said Cabot Corp. personnel director Michael Widmer. "There's no question that we're in the beginning of a wave and that we'll see more and more organizations

SMOKING, Page 30



**WHITE**  
Smoker



**GANNON**  
Non-smoker

### 'It was one more ... aggravation'

**WALTHAM** - For Amy White and Christopher Gannon, two staff members at Cabot Corp., the company's tough new no-smoking policy is a two-sided coin. White smokes and Gannon doesn't.

Said Gannon, a lawyer with the company's law department, "I think it's great. The worst situation was in conference rooms. If you were there any length of time, the smokers could make life uncomfortable for you. It was one more small aggravation."

Not the sort who demands that smokers put out their cigarettes, Gannon said he "internalized" his irritation. "In some situations," he said, "you could work it out. Some smokers are considerate; others are not. There's no clear right until somebody draws the line."

Amy White, a personnel staff member who smokes, does not object to the policy. She was nervous about offending nonsmokers, and adds, "I was just as nervous to say 'Do you mind if I smoke?'"

Yet she's in some doubt about how she'll handle the crisis. Come next Jan. 1, there'll be nowhere at work to have a smoke.

"I really want to quit," she said, "but I'm a great procrastinator. I'll probably put it off until November or December. I imagine I'll not smoke for a week, then start smoking at home."

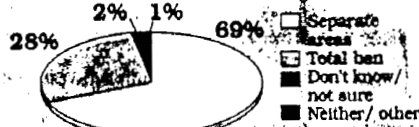
White expects this year to take a company-sponsored quit-smoking course, and she reassures herself that she and her smoking colleagues are not alone. "We're all in the same boat," she said, "and we'll support one another."

### Smoking in the workplace

Are you in favor of policies which restrict smoking in the workplace? (3,733 households surveyed)



Favored smoking restriction policy in the workplace (2,491 households surveyed)



Source: Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Circle staff chart/Judi Jordan Valoria



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Smoke break at Texas Instruments Inc., Attleboro.

Globe photo/Barry Allen

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### ■ SMOKING

Continued from Page 25

deal with this in a more total fashion."

"We have eliminated smoking at desks, private offices, anywhere you work," said Robert Webb, a spokesman for Boston Gas. "It had support at the top of the house. It was a sign of the times." In most cases, policies have been phased in gradually and smokers have been offered company-paid quit-smoking classes.

The business trend appears to have support among the general public. A 1985 Gallup poll found that 80 percent of smokers, 92 percent of nonsmokers and 89 percent of former smokers favored some workplace restrictions on smoking. A 1986 Massachusetts survey found that 67 percent favored restrictions.

Despite tougher policies in some companies, many large Boston-area employers still handle workplace smoking tently and informally. John Hancock, Teradyne, Gillette, Raytheon and Stop & Shop try to work out differences between smokers and nonsmokers informally.

"In instances where there was a perceived problem by nonsmokers," said Patricia Klarfeld, a spokeswoman for Gillette, "the company has been able to work out mutually satisfactory arrangements between smokers and nonsmokers. It hasn't been a problem."

#### "People just didn't care"

Nonsmokers at Texas Instruments and Cabot expressed elation at the new policies. "I don't like smoke blown in my face," said Marie Sawyer, an office worker at Texas Instruments' Attleboro complex. "People just didn't care sometimes." Texas Instruments allows smoking only in

lounges and a small room near the cafeteria, and only at certain times. The policy started in the Massachusetts facility, and has been adopted by the company nationwide.

Several smokers at Texas Instruments are taking the new policy in stride. "It doesn't bother me," said John Cotter. "It's helping me cut down. I go outside for a smoke at breaks."

Others are angry. Designer John Presnol said the company should have allowed smoking in certain work areas. "One of the things that got me," he said, "was that they labeled it a 'clean air policy.' We don't have smoke, but nothing else was improved. You look at the air filters and they're black - they only change them once a year."

For nonsmokers bothered by smoke in the workplace, a sometimes-painful dilemma was whether to complain and risk bad feeling. "I was angry that I was forced to be in an area where people smoked," said James Ryan, a computer specialist with Cabot. "But I always internalized it."

#### Rights trampled

Some smokers feel the new policies trample their rights. "I think it's unfair," said Bette Ahern, a secretary at Cabot. "I can understand the reasoning, but they should have considered the smoker. I certainly know what smoke does to me and I don't need Cabot to tell me."

In Cambridge, businesses without antismoking policies have had one handed to them. The Cambridge ordinance, which takes effect in March, bans smoking wherever the public is permitted, including offices, hotels, hospitals, stores and banks. It includes all but federal government buildings.

State government lags behind

Cambridge. The Dukakis administration had hoped to announce a policy Jan. 1 banning most smoking in state buildings. The policy has yet to be announced, however, because the state Office of Employee Relations is trying to come to an agreement with nine state employee unions on details of the policy.

The move toward office-wide smoking bans represents a fundamental shift in assumptions about questions of rights where smoking is concerned.

"I want to avoid the perception that this is an issue to be voted on," said Rita Addison of Clean Air Associates, a Boston consultant specializing in helping business develop antismoking policies. "Those days are over. This is too documented. We don't ask people in a hotel if they want a sprinkler system." Addison helped Texas Instruments, Stride-Rite and Index Systems devise their policies.

Addison says management should say to employees: "We have decided this is of concern to our business and we would like to hear how you feel. Implementation could be easiest." Unless management takes it upon itself to be clear, it's a problem that will eat away at the morale of employees."

#### Morale affected

For suffering smokers at firms like Cabot and Texas Instruments, morale is already in doubt. Many have tried to quit smoking before without success and for them the approaching deadline is scary.

"I suspect I'll try to quit altogether," mused Marianne Blaney, a secretary at Cabot, "not quit at work and smoke at home." But not just yet. "I think the moment will come," she said. "I'm not sure when, whether summer or fall. I can't answer that."

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## Hospital policy remains lenient

Though business and government employers are moving toward tough antismoking policies, hospitals appear not to be in the vanguard.

"It's absolutely unbelievable," said John Pinney, director of the Institute for the Study of Smoking Behavior and Policy at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government. "Hospitals deserve to be criticized for their timidity."

Framingham Union and New England Deaconess hospitals have fairly tough anti-smoking policies, but most of Boston's hospitals are relatively lenient. Under conditions and with permission, Massachusetts General Hospital even permits smoking in bed.

Brigham and Women's, Beth Israel and MGH all allow smoking in offices, parts of lobbies and in patient rooms under certain conditions. At Brigham and Women's, smoking is allowed in doctors' lounges outside operating rooms. Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, where many lung cancer patients go for treatment, allows smoking in offices, parts of the lobby and the cafeteria.

"Patients are in a hospital because of a serious problem," said Martin Bander, an MGH spokesman,

"and when you add to their worries about having a serious illness the fact of not being able to smoke, it can create added discomfort."

Dr. Nancy Rigotti, an instructor at Harvard Medical School on the staff at MGH, says smoking should be prohibited in patient rooms. "The main cause of fires in hospitals is people smoking in bed," she said.

"It has always seemed nuts to me," said Rigotti, "that patients who are recovering from heart attacks are not allowed to have coffee, and yet as soon as they get out of intensive care they are allowed to smoke."

Dr. W. Bradford Patterson, chief of the cancer division at Dana-Farber, said the institute's policy is under review by a special committee. Most other hospitals reported similar ongoing reviews.

"Increasingly, staff and employees felt it was too liberal for a cancer institute," Patterson said. "The consensus is that we're moving toward a policy of eliminating smoking entirely. But we also want to provide transition for patients who are here or are coming in for chemotherapy."

- DAVID MEHEGAN