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 NEWS
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Companies Find Them Costly

Why Quit Employing Smokers?

I never realized how expensive smokers are to industry until I read a recent survey which reported that the big companies are turning against tobacco smokers in response to HEW evidence that smoking costs them



Marie Wood

around \$18 billion annually "from absences and premature death from smokers are to industry until I read a recent survey which reported that the big companies are turning against tobacco smokers in response to HEW evidence that smoking costs them So: The Alexandria, Va., fire department has stopped employing anyone who smokes, partially because of a report showing that 18 out of 22 disabledly retirees since 1973 "were smokers who developed heart and lung disease." Also because the Alexandria city fathers estimated disabledly retirement cost around \$300,000 more than the routine retirement. A Spring Grove, Ill., industrial quit employing smokers five years back. Those remaining on the payroll are restricted to smoking in a lunch room with air purifier.

Down in Houston, Texas, a signmaker banned all employee smokers in 1967. Last year's output was around \$40,000 to 166 of its 185 employees. An Illinois firm gave a \$50 reward to any smoker quitting for one year. A New Jersey firm has declared 70 percent of its facility off-limits to smokers. I find the most interesting action that of an Illinois executive who opened a betting widow away back in October, 1976, with employees invited to bet \$100 they could quit smoking for 12 months, their opportunity, doubling their money. Last year, there were 25 winners who got \$2,815. But 45 losers paid \$1,105 to the American Cancer Society. There was no report on how many non-smokers looked out. According to Chicago's Darnell Institute of Business Research 30 percent of U.S. businesses either ban smoking or limit it to designated areas and the three percent pay their employees not to smoke. More than 20 states have laws prohibiting smoking in banks, stores and restaurants, and Johns Manville has stopped hiring asbestos workers who smoke.

As a non-smoker, the only answer I can give to all this: "Just don't take my coffee away from me!"

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