

In recent years electronic cigarettes have become more popular with a threefold increase in sales in 2013. These are not covered by the legal ban on smoking in enclosed workplaces but it is important that employers have a policy on their use.

Their sale is unregulated and there is very little evidence as to their safety. Also the ingredients and quality of electronic cigarettes can vary considerably, however it is likely that they are less harmful to smokers than tobacco. That does not mean that they are safe. It can take many years for cancers and other lung disorders to develop and be recognised. Some research indicates that electronic cigarettes do in fact cause lung damage, but whether this can cause cancer is not yet known.

It may be that electronic cigarettes help existing smokers quit tobacco cigarettes, although evidence from the USA indicates that many users are new smokers who were not previously addicted to nicotine. It is also claimed that they are more likely to appeal to young people and some manufacturers seem to be targeting that market through the use of colours and flavours such as bubblegum and candy floss. Certainly there has been a big increase in reported poisonings from electronic cigarettes in the UK, with 139 calls in 2013 compared to 29 in 2012 and 36 over the five years before that.

The TUC strongly recommends that unions should ensure that electronic cigarettes are subject to the same restrictions in the workplace as tobacco. They should not be used in any indoor place. This is because the risk to others is unknown, but also because it can be confusing if people are seen to be smoking what can look like tobacco. This undermines the smoking ban.

However employers and health campaigners may wish to promote the use of electronic cigarettes for existing smokers to help them give up, on the understanding that they only use them when they would normally smoke a cigarette and not anywhere that smoking is restricted.

New rules by train operators including C2C, Greater Anglia and First Capital Connect, which operate services in the South East and East Anglia, have announced a complete ban on passengers using the nicotine devices.

Almost 1.5 million Britons now use the electronic devices, which resemble traditional cigarettes, to help them overcome their addiction to tobacco, but the rail companies insist some varieties still expel nicotine, and can make other passengers feel uneasy.

A Greater Anglia spokesman said: "In common with other train operators we have recently taken the decision to include cigarettes in the smoking ban on our trains and stations.

"This decision is in line with the British Medical Association's recommendation that e-cigarettes should be included in the ban on smoking in public places."

At the BMA's annual meeting, our members agreed that e-cigarettes should be included in the ban on smoking in public places

In line with the British Medical Association's recommendation that e-cigarettes should be included in the ban on smoking in public places, Bush Hill Park Golf Club's Management Committee has agreed that, with immediate effect, electronic cigarettes are subject to the same restrictions as tobacco. They should not be used in any indoor place. The reason for this policy is because the risk to others is unknown, and also that it can be confusing if people are seen to be smoking what can look like tobacco. This undermines the no smoking rule.