



Smokers at a designated smoking area in front of Far East Plaza along Scotts Road yesterday. The National Environment Agency said that an average of 21 tickets per day were issued in the month of April last year – after enforcement began – and the number fell to an average of 15 tickets daily in the last four months of the year. ST PHOTO: KUA CHEE SIONG

Orchard Road smoking ban: Over 4,000 tickets issued last year

Head of business group for area says no reports of business being affected since curbs enforced

Vanessa Liu

More than 4,000 tickets were issued last year to those who had violated the Orchard Road smoking ban since it came into effect on April 1, said the National Environment Agency (NEA).

Those issued tickets have to pay a composition fine of \$200.

The agency added that 26 per cent of the tickets were issued to tourists, while the remaining were issued to residents.

Since the start of last year, public areas within the Orchard Road precinct have been designated as no-smoking zones, and smoking is allowed in only the designated smoking areas (DSAs) dotted along the popular shopping street.

Those found smoking were issued advisories during the three-

month advisory period from January to March, which was adopted to give smokers sufficient time to adjust to the new ban, the NEA said in a statement yesterday.

Besides deploying enforcement officers on the ground, the agency has also been using surveillance cameras to monitor smoking hot spots in the smoke-free zone.

The agency added that a daily average of 735 advisories were issued to offenders during the advisory period, while an average of 21 tickets per day were issued in the month of April, after enforcement began.

The number fell to an average of 15 tickets per day for the last four months of last year.

NEA attributed the reduction in numbers to the general awareness that the Orchard Road precinct had become a smoke-free zone, something the agency hopes to highlight by having blue stickers that say “no smoking zone” on more than 100 litter bins along Orchard Road.

The smoke-free zone covers the stretch of Orchard Road starting with Tanglin Mall at one end and

26%

Percentage of smoking violation tickets issued to tourists, while the remaining were issued to residents.

ending with Plaza Singapura at the other.

According to the results of a survey conducted by the NEA in July last year, 80 per cent of 1,000 respondents – about 400 of whom were smokers – supported the smoking ban in Orchard Road.

Positive public health impact was cited as the number one reason for those who supported the move.

Dr Yvette van der Eijk, senior research fellow at the National University of Singapore’s Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health, said that implementing smoke-free public areas protects people from second-hand smoke, which kills more than 600,000 non-smokers worldwide every year.

She added that having smoke-free zones in an entertainment district like Orchard Road also serves to remove the association between smoking and other leisurely activities such as shopping, drinking and going out.

Mr Mark Shaw, chairman of the Orchard Road Business Association, said he had not received any reports of business being affected since the smoking ban was implemented.

He noted that during peak hours, however, the designated smoking areas can be rather crowded. There are 54 designated smoking areas, four of which have been added since April last year. The smoking areas are spaced about 200m apart.

Mr William Soe, 25, a sales supervisor at Isetan in Shaw House, agreed that there is a jostle for space during weekends at the smoking areas, which, according to NEA guidelines, should not be larger than 20 sq m.

He added that it would be good to have a shelter over the open-air designated smoking areas, which are exposed to the elements.

Mr Tomy Teo, director of NEA’s environmental public health operations, said there were no plans to have more designated smoking areas, or to expand or enhance the smoking areas themselves.

He said: “We have more than 50 DSAs in the zone, most of which are within walking distance from wherever you are. You could also walk out of the zone to smoke.”

“As you can see, Orchard Road is a very busy place. There are not really a lot of places you can site the DSAs. We have to work very closely with the premises’ operators and site them where we can.”

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