



Health Dept. notified of smoking ban violation at courthouse

July 22, 2008 09:48 am

— By KANDACE MCCOY

kandace.mccoy@register-news.com

MT. VERNON — An educational letter has been sent to the Jefferson County Board regarding a complaint filed with the Jefferson County Health Department of a possible violation of the Smoke-Free Illinois Act at the courthouse. Mark Stevens, director of the health department, confirmed a complaint had been filed by someone who allegedly saw “someone smoking within 15 feet of the courthouse.” Stevens said an educational letter had been mailed out to the courthouse, informing the board the health department had received a complaint.

County Board Chairman Ted Buck said he was aware of the letter, and the Building and Inventory Committee would be addressing the issue at tonight’s committee meeting. The letter will also be addressed at the next county board meeting, Buck noted, and added that if a violation had occurred, “we’ll turn it over to the people who should handle it.” Buck said he did not know who the alleged offender is.

The Smoke-Free Illinois Act went into effect at midnight on Jan. 1. The new law is an extension of the Illinois Clean Air Act and goes “beyond public government buildings” and now extends to public buildings, according to Stevens. The law is intended to protect employees and the public from secondhand smoke.

Under the law, smoking is prohibited in public places or places of employment, and smoking is not allowed 15 feet within an entrance to a public establishment.

If violators chose not to comply, they can be given a citation or even arrested if noncompliance continues.

Stevens said if noncompliance continues at the courthouse, another educational letter, warning letter, or a penalty could be given.

Violators can be fined between \$100 and \$250 under terms of the act. A person who owns, operates or otherwise controls a public place or place of employment who violates the act can be fined not less than \$250 for the first violation, not less than \$500 for the second violation within one year after the first violation and not less than \$2,500 for each additional violation within one year after the first violation.

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