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From Page:
1
9/24/2013
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Smokers restricted further at the Ralph

■ If guests want to smoke, they can leave, but they can't come back

By Jennifer Johnson
Herald Staff Writer

Those who want to take a smoke break during events at Grand Forks' Ralph Engelstad Arena will be free to leave but they won't be allowed back in starting Oct. 6, the night of the first UND men's hockey game, arena spokesman Chris Semrau said.

This will affect all events at the arena itself and the Betty Engelstad Sioux Center.

Do you agree or disagree with the Ralph's smoking policy?
☐ **Agree**
☐ **Disagree**
☐ **It doesn't matter to me**

Vote at gfherald.com.

The arena's new policy would be consistent with UND's tobacco policy, and is another step to ensure a healthier workplace for employees on event nights, Semrau said Monday.

UND became a tobacco-free campus in 2007, but the Ralph was among the places exempted. The

SMOKING: See Page A2

Grand Forks
Herald
Grand Forks,ND
Circ. 32450
From Page:
a2
9/24/2013
394368

SMOKING/

Continued from Page A1

arena was able to offer guests an outdoor smoking zone.

Arena officials have considered getting rid of those zones for years, Semrau said. Though he estimates the number of people who smoke at arena events is low, he said tobacco smoke drifting into the building while children were present was enough to trigger complaints. "Most guests and staff said they didn't want smoking allowed anymore."

"The community itself has voted to remove smoking from most establishments, and this is another step in that direction," Semrau said, referring to city laws restricting smoking indoors.

"We thought this was the right next step for the facility," he said. "With any change, you'll always have some negative feedback. But we hope to address what we're doing and why we're doing it, and we believe it will not have a major impact on guests."

Information about the new policy will be sent to season ticket holders in the next week, he said.

Call Johnson at (701) 787-6736; (800) 477-6572, ext. 1736; or send email to jjohnson@gfherald.com