

Three German states begin smoking bans

by UPI

BERLIN -- Smoking bans took effect in three German states for the first time Wednesday with different rules in each region. Smokers in Baden-Wurttemberg, Lower Saxony and Mecklenburg-West Pomerania cannot light up in local government buildings, schools, other institutions for children and hospitals, Deutsche Welle reported. Mecklenburg-Pomerania plans to outlaw smoking in restaurants and bars on Jan. 1, while the other two states require them to limit smokers to certain areas. Germany has been behind most other European countries in outlawing smoking in indoor public spaces. Most of the states plan to institute new restrictions in January. The federal government is limited by the constitution. It plans to ban smoking in its own government buildings and in airports and on most forms of public transport, starting Sept. 1. Critics say Germany needs a stronger national policy. "A non-smoker in Stuttgart has the same right to clean air as one in Rostock," Lothar Binding, a Social Democratic member of Parliament, told Tageszeitung.

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