

Social networking app joins battle against smoking in Beijing

An increasing number of reports related to smoking in indoor public places have been made on China's popular social networking app WeChat.

Beijing Tobacco Control Association said its official account on WeChat, "Smoke-Free Beijing" received 2,717 reports from August to October.

It said an average of 900 reports have been received every month, with an increase of 50 percent compared with that of the second quarter of the year. The complaints were mainly concerning restaurants, office buildings and Internet cafes.

Smoking controls have made some progress in the city, said the association, adding that medical institutions, schools and hotels have seen greater improvement among other indoor public places.

By following the official account, people can instantly report and upload photos related to any smoking violation in indoor public areas.

Names and locations of involved companies or organizations will be exposed on eBeijing, an official website authorized by the Beijing Municipal Government, and the website of Beijing Municipal Commission of Health and Family Planning.

Volunteers will then be sent to these places to investigate and deal with violators. Those who have been reported more than five times will be punished by smoking control departments.

Beijing, home to more than four million adult smokers, rolled out the "strictest smoking ban in history" on June 1, 2015, prohibiting smoking in indoor public places, workplaces and public transportation.

A total of 1,245 workplaces and 5,243 individuals have been punished for violating the ban over the past 29 months.