



Oregon Becomes the 4th State to Ensure Smoke-Free Operating Rooms

Beginning in 2023, all licensed hospitals and freestanding ambulatory surgical facilities in Oregon must adopt policies to use a smoke evacuation system for procedures that generate surgical smoke.

(Denver, Colo.) June 23, 2021 – Oregon Governor Kate Brown has signed legislation that will require hospitals and ambulatory surgery centers to prevent human exposure to smoke in the operating room. The [new law](#), which becomes effective Jan. 1, 2023, allows facilities to select a smoke evacuation system of their choice to use during surgical procedures that are likely to generate surgical smoke.

Surgical smoke is caused by heat-producing devices, such as lasers and electrocautery devices that are commonly used during surgery. According to the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA), each year an estimated 500,000 health care workers are exposed to laser or electrosurgical smoke. This smoke, also known as plume, includes carbon monoxide, polyaromatic hydrocarbons, and a variety of trace toxic gases. Prolonged exposure can lead to serious and life-threatening respiratory diseases.

The Association of periOperative Registered Nurses (AORN) led the effort to generate support for the legislation and worked with a team of dedicated advocates who engaged lawmakers and testified for the bill.

“This is an important step forward to protect the health and safety of nurses, surgeons, anesthesia providers, and other members of surgical teams in facilities throughout Oregon,” said Jennifer Pennock, AORN senior manager of Government Affairs. “We are grateful to Rep. Sheri Schouten for sponsoring the legislation and shepherding it through the legislature this year.”

Oregon joins Rhode Island, Colorado and Kentucky in providing smoke-free operating rooms for all hospitals and ambulatory surgery centers across their states. AORN is advocating for the adoption of similar legislation in other states as well.

ABOUT AORN

Founded in 1949, AORN unites and empowers leading surgical nurses, health care organizations and industry in working together to define standardized practice in the operating room. As the world's largest professional association for perioperative nurses, the association's evidence-based guidelines, continuing education and clinical practice resources lead to optimal outcomes in patient care. AORN makes surgery safe for every patient, every time.

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CONTACT

Gayle Davis, AORN

303-928-9105

gdavis@aorn.org