



# *CITY of NORTHAMPTON*

## *Department of Health and Human Services*

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**Public Health**  
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Northampton Department of  
Health & Human Services

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## **Northampton Board of Health Approves New Regulation Restricting Sale of Nitrous Oxide**

NORTHAMPTON — The Northampton Board of Health has unanimously voted to approve a new regulation restricting the sale of Nitrous Oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O) within the city. Under the new policy, the sale of N<sub>2</sub>O is prohibited in all retail establishments in Northampton, except licensed kitchen supply stores and medical supply stores. The regulation also limits sales to individuals 21 years of age and older and requires businesses to verify age using a valid government-issued photo ID. First introduced in February 2025, the regulation was discussed at subsequent Board of Health meetings and formally adopted by unanimous vote on April 17, 2025.

Nitrous Oxide is a central nervous system depressant that, when inhaled, deprives the brain of oxygen and produces a brief euphoric, dissociative effect. While N<sub>2</sub>O has legitimate uses in medicine and the food industry, its recreational misuse poses serious health risks. These include short- and long-term damage to the brain, nerves, liver, and kidneys. Nationally, recreational use—especially among teens and young adults—has increased sharply in recent years. The emergence of flavored N<sub>2</sub>O products, similar to those in the e-cigarette market, has heightened concerns by increasing the appeal to young people.

The new Northampton regulation will take effect on June 15, 2025. It includes a tiered penalty structure for violations, ranging from monetary fines to suspension of sales privileges (for permitted vendors) to potential criminal charges for repeat or severe infractions. “This regulation is designed to prevent harm, not to punish,” said Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Commissioner Merridith O’Leary. “Our goal is to reduce access to nitrous oxide for recreational use and protect public health—especially among young people—while ensuring that businesses clearly understand and can comply with the new rules.”

To view the full Nitrous Oxide regulation, community members and business owners are encouraged to visit the DHHS website [here](#). The regulation outlines in detail the restrictions on sales, age verification requirements, exemptions for certain businesses, and the tiered penalty structure for violations. Any future updates or guidance materials related to the regulation will also be posted on the website.

For questions about this regulation or press release, please contact Amy Cronin DiCaprio, Grants and Communications Specialist, at [adicaprio@northamptonma.gov](mailto:adicaprio@northamptonma.gov).