

03. September 2025

Public policy

Bocholt bans sale of nitrous oxide to minors

New regulatory ordinance in force since 15 July

A ban on the sale and distribution of nitrous oxide to minors has been in force in Bocholt since 15 July 2025. With the new ordinance, the city wants to protect children and young people from the considerable health risks of nitrous oxide abuse.

A new regulatory ordinance has been in force in Bocholt for several weeks now, which prohibits the sale and distribution of nitrous oxide ("nitrous oxide") to minors. The aim is to better protect children and young people in the city from the dangers of nitrous oxide abuse.

In recent months, it has become apparent that the misuse of laughing gas as a party drug is also on the rise in Bocholt. Discarded cartridges can be found more and more frequently in the city, especially in green areas or along the Bocholter Aa. Nitrous oxide is mistakenly considered harmless, but can cause considerable damage to health if overdosed - from oxygen deficiency and frostbite to neurological impairment.

The city council therefore unanimously passed a corresponding ordinance on 10 July 2025. It stipulates that the sale of nitrous oxide to under-18s will be prohibited in future - regardless of whether it is for a fee or free of charge. Sales outlets are obliged to ensure that minors do not have access to nitrous oxide. Vending machines without an adequate safety mechanism are prohibited. Violations will be punished as an administrative offence and punished with a fine of at least 500 euros to 1,000 euros. The ordinance is valid until 31 December 2027.

"With the new ordinance, we are sending a clear signal for the protection of children and young people in Bocholt. Nitrous oxide is not a harmless fun substance, but can have serious health consequences. We take our responsibility to protect young people from such health risks seriously", explains First City Councillor Björn Volmering, who is responsible for the Public Order Department.

The city of Bocholt appeals to all sales outlets to implement the new regulation consistently and thus make an important contribution to health prevention.

The legal basis for the new regulation can be found in the North Rhine-Westphalian Public Order Authorities Act. This law allows cities to issue their own ordinances when it comes to averting threats to public safety and order. On this basis, Bocholt can therefore intervene if - as in the case of laughing gas - there is a risk to the health of children and young people. At the same time, the law also allows fines to be imposed for offences.

The ordinance can be found on the website of the city of Bocholt at www.bocholt.de/ortsrecht



Empty nitrous oxide ampoule in the park

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