

FACT SHEET: SECONDHAND SMOKE

What is Secondhand Smoke?

- * Secondhand smoke is a mixture of the smoke exhaled by a smoker and the smoke that comes from the burning end of a cigarette, cigar or pipe.¹
- * It is also called environmental tobacco smoke, passive smoke or side-stream smoke.¹
- * Studies show that secondhand smoke is a major part of indoor air pollution in the US.²

Why is Secondhand Smoke dangerous?

- * Secondhand smoke contains over **4,000 chemicals**. Some of these chemicals are tar, formaldehyde, acetone, and methanol.¹
- * Secondhand smoke contains **250 substances** known to be toxic. Some of these are ammonia, cyanide, and carbon monoxide.¹
- * Over **50 substances** in secondhand smoke have been identified as known (or reasonably anticipated) human carcinogens (cause cancer).¹
- * Because of these facts, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has classified secondhand smoke as a Class A Carcinogen (**known** to cause cancer in humans).
There is no safe level of exposure to Class A Carcinogens.¹

What does Secondhand Smoke cause?

- * Lung cancer caused by exposure to secondhand smoke is responsible for approximately 3,000 deaths each year in non-smokers.¹
- * Exposure to secondhand smoke causes approximately 46,000 heart disease deaths each year in non-smokers.¹
- * More than 400 newborn deaths from sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) are caused by secondhand smoke exposure.¹
- * Secondhand smoke exposure is related to increased risk of asthma, lung infections, other breathing problems and middle ear infections, and some cancers in children.¹
- * Secondhand smoke exposure is related to increased risk of lung infection and other breathing problems, heart disease, and non-lung cancers in adults and the elderly.¹

What are the economic costs of Secondhand Smoke in the workplace?

- * Smoke-filled workplaces result in missed work days, less productivity at work, higher cleaning and maintenance costs, increased health insurance rates, and increased liability claims for diseases related to exposure to secondhand smoke.³
- * Smoking is a potential cause of fires; cigarette and cigar burns and ash stains on merchandise and fixtures causes economic damage to businesses.³

Why is a Non-Smoking section not enough?

- * The U.S. Surgeon General has determined that the simple separation of smokers and nonsmokers within the same air space may reduce, but does not eliminate, the exposure of nonsmokers to secondhand smoke.¹
- * The EPA has determined that exposure to secondhand smoke cannot be reduced to safe levels in businesses by high rates of ventilation. Air cleaners may eliminate odors, but they do not eliminate the known toxins in secondhand smoke.¹
- * The American Society of Heating, Refrigerating & Air-Conditioning Engineers states that there is no current technology that can control the health risks associated with secondhand smoke in spaces where smoking occurs.⁴
- * These lead to the common statement that "Sitting in the 'non-smoking' section of a restaurant is like swimming in the 'non-peeing' section of a pool."

Why can't people who are bothered by Secondhand Smoke just go somewhere else?

- * The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that disabled persons have access to all public places and work places. Several court cases have found that impaired respiratory function (difficulty breathing due to one of a number of causes) is a disability under this act. Restricting access to a public or work place due to a disability is wrong.¹

What are the economic costs of clean indoor air ordinances?

- * Since 94% of Americans favor work place smoking restrictions,⁵ morale at the work place is boosted when companies go smoke-free.⁶
- * Numerous economic analyses examining restaurant and hotel receipts and controlling for economic variables have shown either no difference or a positive economic impact after enactment of laws requiring workplaces to be smokefree.^{1,2}
- * Four years after a ban of smoking in bars in California, 87% of customers--including smokers--said they are more likely to visit bars, or have not changed their bar-going behavior, as a result of the law.⁷
- * Studies of sales tax in 81 localities in six states demonstrate that ordinances restricting smoking in restaurants had no effect on restaurant revenues.⁸

References

- ¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS). (2006). *The health consequences of involuntary exposure to tobacco smoke: A report of the Surgeon General*. Atlanta, GA: USDHHS, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Coordinating Center for Health Promotion, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health (OSH).
- ² American Nonsmokers' Rights Foundation. (Last Updated September 11, 2006). *Bibliography of secondhand smoke studies*. Available at: <http://www.no-smoke.org/pdf/SHSBibliography.pdf>.
- ³ *The High Price of Cigarette Smoking*. Business & Health, 15(8), Supplement A: 6-9, August 1997.
- ⁴ American Society of Heating, Refrigeration, and Air-Conditioning Engineers, Inc. *Environmental Tobacco Smoke: Position Document*. Atlanta, GA: Author. June 2005.
- ⁵ The Gallup Organization, Inc (TGO). (1992). *Survey of the public's attitudes toward smoking*. Princeton, NJ: TGO.
- ⁶ USDHHS. (2000). *Making your workplace smokefree: A decision maker's guide*. Atlanta GA: CDC, OSH.
- ⁷ Office of the Governor. *Governor Davis Announces Smoke-Free Workplace/Bar Survey Results*. (November 20, 2002) Press Release. Available at: <http://www.dhs.ca.gov/tobacco/documents/press/PressRelease11-20-02.pdf>