

Report of the U.S. Surgeon General 2006

***The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure
to Tobacco Smoke***

“The debate is over. The science is clear.”

Richard Carmona, MD, MPH, FACS
U.S. Surgeon General (2006)

“[I]nvoluntary exposure to secondhand smoke remains a serious public health hazard that can be prevented by making homes, workplaces, and public places completely smoke-free.”

Michael O. Leavitt
Secretary of Health and Human Services

1. Tens of Thousands of Deaths Annually

“[S]econdhand smoke kills more than 3,000 adult nonsmokers from lung cancer, approximately 46,000 from coronary heart disease, and an estimated 430 newborns from sudden infant death syndrome.” (Foreword, p. i)

“[E]xposure to secondhand smoke remains an alarming public health hazard. Approximately 60 percent of nonsmokers in the United States have biologic evidence of exposure to secondhand smoke.” (Preface, iii)

“Exposure of adults to secondhand smoke has immediate adverse effects on the cardiovascular system and causes heart disease and lung cancer. ... The scientific evidence indicates that there is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke.” (ES, p. 9)

“Restaurant and bar workers are far less likely than other workers to be protected by smoke-free workplace policies [and] more likely to be exposed to high levels of secondhand smoke on the job.” (p. 599)

2. Ventilation Cannot Control Health Harms

“The Surgeon General has concluded that smoke-free workplace policies are the only effective way to eliminate secondhand smoke exposure in the workplace. Separating smokers from nonsmokers, cleaning the air and ventilating buildings cannot eliminate exposure.” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, www.surgeongeneral.gov)

“Eliminating smoking in indoor spaces fully protects non-smokers from exposure to secondhand smoke. Separating smokers from nonsmokers, cleaning the air, and ventilating buildings cannot eliminate exposures to secondhand smoke.” (ES, p.9)

“Establishing smoke-free workplaces is the only effective way to ensure that secondhand smoke exposure does not occur in the workplace. ... Exposures of nonsmokers to secondhand smoke cannot be controlled by air cleaning or mechanical air exchange.” (ES, p. 14)

“[N]either central heating, ventilating and air conditioning systems nor separately ventilated rooms control exposures to secondhand smoke.” (ES, p. 23)

“Only policies that (at a minimum) require indoor facilities to be completely smoke-free provide effective protection from secondhand smoke exposure.” (Chapter 10, p. 598)

“On the basis of this review, it is clear that banning smoking from the workplace is the only effective way to ensure that exposures are not occurring. Despite reductions in workplace smoking, significant worker safety issues remain that only smoking bans can address.” (Chapter 10, p. 650)

3. Smokefree Laws Don't Hurt the Hospitality Industry

“Evidence from peer-reviewed studies shows that smoke-free policies and regulations do not have an adverse economic impact on the hospitality industry.” (ES, p. 14)

“No peer-reviewed study using objective indicators such as sales tax revenues and employment levels found an adverse economic impact of smoke-free laws on restaurants and bars.” (p. 616)

4. Public Support for Smoking Restrictions

“The need for restrictions on smoking in enclosed public places is now widely accepted in the United States. A growing number of communities, counties and states are requiring smoke-free environments for nearly all enclosed public places including all private worksites, restaurants, bars and casinos.” (ES, p. 23)

5. Rights and Responsibilities

“[T]he right of smokers to smoke ends where their behavior affects the health and well-being of others; furthermore, it is the smokers' responsibility to ensure that they do not expose nonsmokers [to the harmful effects of tobacco smoke].”

-- U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop (1986)