

Fact Sheets for Public and Policymaker Education

Smokefree policies are Good for Workers

- There are laws protecting workers from many toxic chemicals such as asbestos, pesticides, and radon (1), yet secondhand smoke is found in higher concentrations than all other particulate air pollutants including emissions from busses, trucks, and autos on busy roads during rush hour (2). It also causes more deaths each year than all of the regulated chemical work hazards combined (1).
- Secondhand smoke increases worker deaths from lung cancer (3-6) and heart disease (7-11) and causes a variety of discomforts such as phlem, coughing, and red, watery eyes (4).
- In addition, non-smoking workers are bothered by secondhand smoke. A Multnomah County Restaurant Employee survey found that 92% of non-smokers and 39% of smokers were bothered by the secondhand smoke they encountered while working (12).
- It has been shown that workplace exposure to secondhand smoke may be greater than exposure from living with a smoker and that some workplaces, such as restaurants and bars have much greater exposure. Restaurant workers are exposed to 1.5 times more smoke than smoker's spouses and bar workers are exposed to up to 4.5 times the amount of secondhand smoke (13) found in a smoker's home. This is why waitresses who do not smoke have 4 times the incidence of lung cancer compared to other non-smokers (13).
- Smokefree Workplace Policies improve worker morale and health. Bartenders in California have already noticed improved health after the implementation of Measure 99 (14).

References

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