

SMOKE  
**FREE**  
KENTUCKY

## SECONDHAND SMOKE AND SMOKE-FREE WORKPLACE LAWS



# THE U.S. SURGEON GENERAL ENCOURAGES SMOKE-FREE PROTECTION FOR ALL

Fifty years after the first Surgeon General's report on smoking and health, the 2014 Report, *The Health Consequences of Smoking-50 Years of Progress*<sup>1</sup>, shows that cigarette smoking is more hazardous than previously thought. The report warns that the burden of smoking-attributable disease and premature death and its high costs to the nation will continue for decades unless smoking prevalence is reduced more rapidly than the current trajectory. The report also notes millions of deaths could be averted, making tobacco control the highest priority in our overall public health commitment and strategy (p. 870-871).

Noting that the current rate of progress in tobacco control is not fast enough and that more needs to be done, the Surgeon General's report calls for a number of specific actions, **including extending comprehensive smoke-free indoor protections to 100% of the U.S. population** (p. 875).

### SMOKE-FREE WORKPLACE LAWS

“Substantial progress toward eliminating exposure among nonsmokers to secondhand smoke has been made over the last 50 years. Nevertheless, the population in over half of the United States is not adequately protected from involuntary exposure to secondhand smoke by comprehensive smoke-free policies covering public and private workplaces, restaurants, bars, and other public enclosed environments (p. 442).”

The new report finds that “smoke-free legislation at the state and local levels is a key component of a comprehensive tobacco control strategy (p. 792).”

The report calls for action on a number of “effective programs and policies” including “complete protection of the entire U.S. population from exposure to tobacco smoke through comprehensive smoke-free indoor air policies (p. 872).”

### HEALTH IMPACTS FROM SECONDHAND SMOKE EXPOSURE

“Today, the adverse health effects of exposure to secondhand smoke are well understood, and firm causal conclusions have been reached on its risk to the health of nonsmokers (p. 777).”

In one of the report's ten major conclusions, the Surgeon General found that “Exposure to secondhand tobacco smoke has been causally linked to cancer, respiratory, and cardiovascular diseases, and to adverse effects on the health of infants and children (p. 7).” Specifically, the Surgeon General found that secondhand smoke is causally linked to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (p. 5).

In a new finding, the report concludes that secondhand smoke exposure increases the risk of stroke in nonsmokers (p. 434).

More than 41,200 nonsmokers die every year in the United States from heart disease and lung cancer caused by exposure to secondhand smoke (p.659-660). Since the first Surgeon General's report on smoking in 1964, about 2.5 million nonsmokers have died from diseases caused by exposure to secondhand smoke (p. 677).

## BENEFITS OF SMOKE-FREE LAWS AND POLICIES

The 2014 Surgeon General's Report recognizes many benefits of smoke-free laws and policies.

### *Reducing exposure to secondhand smoke:*

- “Policies and laws making indoor workplaces and public places smoke-free (i.e. eliminating smoking in all indoor areas with no exceptions) have been found to be highly effective in reducing exposure to secondhand smoke (p. 794).”

### *Reducing heart attacks and acute coronary events:*

- “There is a scientific consensus that exposure to secondhand smoke causes increased risk for acute cardiovascular events or hospitalizations. Further, there is strong evidence that a comprehensive smoke-free law eliminating smoking in all indoor areas of public places and workplaces, including restaurants and bars, reduces exposure to secondhand smoke. The epidemiologic evidence reviewed in this section indicates that the evidence is sufficient to conclude that if the implementation of a smoke-free law results in a decrease in exposure to secondhand smoke, a reduction in acute coronary events will follow (p. 441).”
- “The evidence is sufficient to infer a causal relationship between the implementation of a smoke-free law or policy and a reduction in coronary events among people younger than 65 years of age (p. 442).”
- “Max and colleagues (2012) have estimated that in 2006 over 42,000 deaths in this country were caused by exposure to secondhand smoke. This estimate included almost 34,000 deaths from coronary heart disease. Based on the findings of this evidence review, many of these deaths could be averted if comprehensive smoke-free policies were implemented nationwide (p. 442).”
- “Smoke-free policies also have the potential to be one of the most effective and cost-effective approaches for reducing acute coronary events in this country and around the world (p.445).”

### *Reducing smoking:*

- “The primary purpose of laws and policies on secondhand smoke is to protect nonsmokers from exposure to secondhand smoke. However, a growing body of evidence suggests that these policies have the additional benefit of lowering smoking rates among youth and young adults. There are several pathways for this effect including lower visibility of role models who smoke, fewer opportunities to smoke alone or with others, and diminished social acceptability and social advantage for smoking (p. 792).”
- “In addition to reducing exposure to secondhand smoke, smoke-free policies and laws have also been found to reduce active smoking. The 2006 Surgeon General's report concluded that workplace smoking restrictions lead to less smoking. The 2012 Community Guide's conclusion on the effects of smoke-free policies found that these policies reduce the prevalence of tobacco use, increase the number of tobacco users who quit, and reduce tobacco use initiation among young people (p. 795).”

## FOOTNOTE

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *The Health Consequences of Smoking: 50 Years of Progress. A Report of the Surgeon General*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2014. <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/reports/50-years-of-progress/index.html>.