



San Francisco Tobacco Free Coalition

PROTECTING SAN FRANCISCANS FROM SECONDHAND SMOKE

FALL 2006

San Francisco's Secondhand Smoke Ordinance is Outdated and Full of Loopholes

Although California and San Francisco have adopted various public policies over the past several years to protect the public from the toxic hazards of secondhand smoke exposure, residents, workers and visitors in San Francisco continue to be involuntarily exposed to secondhand smoke, sometimes on a daily basis. Currently, only 15% of San Francisco adults are smokers and 64% of San Franciscans support increasing protections from second hand smoke.

The city ordinance and state law creating most of San Francisco's current protections from secondhand smoke were enacted in 1994 and 1996, over a decade ago. These laws limited protections from secondhand smoke to enclosed areas and were justified by the evidence at the time of health dangers posed by secondhand smoke. However, the laws included loopholes due to political pressure from the tobacco industry, leaving many people unprotected from secondhand smoke. Today, the scientific evidence overwhelmingly demonstrates that secondhand smoke poses an even more serious health hazard to nonsmokers than previously known. Since the mid 1990s, San Francisco has provided protection from secondhand smoke in some outdoor locations by banning smoking in public parks, transit stops and golf courses.

It is now time to bring the City's secondhand smoke ordinance up-to-date and to eliminate the loopholes that fail to protect San Franciscans from exposure to secondhand smoke.

*New U.S. Surgeon General Report: There Is **No Safe Level** of Secondhand Smoke*

A new report released in the summer of 2006 by the United States Surgeon General found that the health effects of secondhand tobacco smoke on children and nonsmokers are severe, and that stronger safety protections are needed to protect public health. The U.S. Surgeon General's report, *The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke*, found that: "massive and conclusive scientific evidence documents adverse effects of involuntary smoking on children and adults, including cancer and cardiovascular diseases in adults, and adverse respiratory effects in both children and adults."

"This new Surgeon General's report is a wakeup call to those who say San Francisco's existing protections are enough and that we've already taken care of the problem of involuntary exposure to secondhand smoke,"

- Alexandra Hernandez, Co-Chair, S.F. Tobacco Free Coalition

The U.S. Surgeon General's report parallels other recent scientific evidence detailing the hazards of secondhand smoke. In January 2006, the California Air Resources Board for the first time declared secondhand smoke to be a Toxic Air Contaminant (TAC) with no safe level of exposure, joining a list that includes benzene, arsenic and diesel exhaust.



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The 2006 California Air Resources Board report, based on a rigorous four-year scientific study that included public comment and peer review, found that concentrations of secondhand smoke in certain outdoor locations could reach levels as high as indoor locations, depending on conditions. This report also provided several new scientific findings, including a finding that secondhand smoke is a cause of breast cancer in younger, pre-menopausal women, and a finding that secondhand smoke can cause asthma in children.

Time To Protect All San Franciscans

Most of the current protections from secondhand smoke in San Francisco are the result of the twelve-year old San Francisco Clean Indoor Air ordinance, adopted in 1994, or the ten-year-old California Smoke-Free Workplace Law, adopted by the Legislature in 1996.

Over the past few years, communities throughout California have begun to expand protection from secondhand smoke exposure by adopting local measures that close loopholes in their local laws and the California Smoke-Free Workplace Law and protect residents in locations such as dining areas, building entrances, bus stops, waiting lines, parks and beaches. Over the past two years, the S.F. Tobacco Free Coalition has supported the adoption of smoke-free ordinances for parks, golf courses, and transit stops.

But now, the new U.S. Surgeon General's report declares an urgent need for a comprehensive approach to the health threat of secondhand smoke, concluding that: **“nonsmokers need protection through the restriction of smoking in public places.”**

How S.F.'s Secondhand Smoke Protections Must Be Strengthened

Every single day, San Francisco residents, workers and visitors stay in hotel and motel rooms, eat in outdoor dining places, walk through building entrances, utilize common areas in apartment buildings and stand in outdoor waiting lines only to find that drifting secondhand smoke that they cannot avoid is irritating their eyes, noses and throats – triggering allergy or asthma attacks and often making chronic lung and other serious health problems worse.

More than a dozen California cities – from Oakland, Palo Alto and Dublin in the north to Santa Barbara and Santa Monica in the south – have already adopted ordinances protecting their residents from secondhand smoke hazards in many of these places. Doesn't the health of San Franciscans deserve the same kind of protection?

The San Francisco Tobacco Free Coalition, a grassroots coalition of health, youth-serving, and environmental agencies, is working to strengthen the city's policies to help those San Franciscans who are currently not protected from exposure to secondhand smoke.

Please contact the S.F. Tobacco Free Coalition at 581-2448 or go to <http://sfftc.globalink.org/coalition.html> to endorse the campaign, get more information or find out what you can to do help us win.