



# Secondhand Smoke Fact Sheet

Everyday, Californians visit parks, beaches, fairs, sporting events, and college campuses. They shop in outdoor malls, dine outdoors, use building entrances and stand in outdoor waiting lines. Throughout these everyday activities, they are often being exposed to drifting secondhand smoke which irritates their eyes, noses and throats – increasing their likelihood of developing heart disease, lung cancer, nasal sinus cancer, acute respiratory infections, ear infections, and asthma.

Since tobacco smoke is very hot when released from a lit cigarette, cigar, or pipe, the heat (similar to a hot air balloon) makes the smoke rise for a short while. The initial visual observation gives the impression that outdoor tobacco smoke harmlessly rises into the atmosphere and away from people. However, the *truth* is that the 4,000 chemicals within the smoke quickly cool off, become invisible, and descend. While descending, the toxic air swirls around nearby children and adults. It can also drift into and contaminate the air within nearby buildings.

Researchers have reported the negative health effects of secondhand smoke for decades. University of California research reveals that inhaled secondhand smoke, which comes from the lit end of a cigarette, cigar, or pipe is approximately four times more toxic than the smoke inhaled by the person who smokes. In 2006, the California Air Resources Board identified secondhand smoke as a toxic air contaminant. Also in 2006, the Surgeon General stated, “The scientific evidence about the dangers of secondhand smoke is indisputable: there is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke”. Most recently, Neil Klepeis, PhD, a Stanford University researcher on secondhand smoke exposure stated, “A person near an outdoor smoker might inhale a breath that contains 50 times more toxic materials than if they were breathing near a non-smoker.”

- The California Air Resources Board identified secondhand smoke as a toxic air contaminant both in and outdoors.

- According to the California Department of Public Health, secondhand smoke in California, causes 4,000 lung cancer and cardiac deaths as well as more than 6,000 pre-term deliveries and low birth weight infants a year.

- The United States Surgeon General Report in June of 2006 designated secondhand smoke a serious public health hazard, with no safe level of exposure.

- According to the California Department of Public Health, over 86% of California adults **do not** smoke.

- A Stanford University study in 2007 found that the levels of exposure to secondhand smoke outdoors can be comparable to the levels of exposure indoors.

- According to the California Smokers’ Helpline, policies that restrict tobacco use have been shown to help and support people who smoke and want to quit.