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Campaign for Smokefree Air Releases Startling Detroit Air Quality Results

CSA continues Air Quality Tour of state, shows health concerns for restaurant employees

Detroit, Mich. – Detroit residents are not protected from deadly secondhand smoke exposure, even when sitting in the nonsmoking section, according to a report released this week by the Campaign for Smokefree Air.

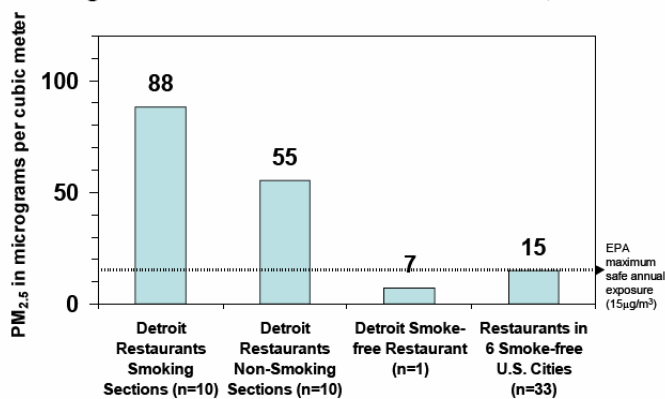
CSA tested 11 restaurants and bars in the Detroit area in January 2006, both smoking and nonsmoking sections, and a smokefree establishment, to measure the indoor air quality for patrons and employees. The results were just made available this week.

“Results from the Detroit air quality testing prove that nonsmoking sections do not provide a strong enough barrier against smoke for those that want to avoid secondhand smoke,” said Judy Stewart, campaign manger for Campaign for Smokefree Air (CSA) and government relations manager for the American Cancer Society. “Looking at the high level of air pollution also tells us that restaurant workers are exposed to deadly toxins every day regardless of whether they work in the smoking or nonsmoking sections.”

The average of the locations visited in Detroit measured at 88 (Figure 1), which federal regulation deems as unhealthy.

Figure 1

Average Fine Particle Air Pollution in Detroit, MI



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These bars and restaurants were visited and assessed on January 6, 7, and 8, 2006, using the TSI SidePak AM510 Personal Aerosol Monitor. PM_{2.5} levels in these 11 locations were compared to similar locations in cities with smokefree air laws and to outdoor air in Detroit. The gathered data was then compiled and analyzed by the Roswell Park Cancer Institute in Buffalo, New York.

PM_{2.5} is the concentration of particulate matter in the air smaller than 2.5 microns in diameter. Particles of this size are released in significant amounts from burning cigarettes and are easily inhaled deep into the lungs. Key findings of the study include:

- The level of indoor air pollution was six times higher in the smoking section of Detroit restaurants compared to restaurants in smokefree cities around the United States.
- The amount of air pollution in the nonsmoking sections was 38 percent lower than in the smoking sections but still four times higher than in restaurants in smokefree cities.
- The average of all the establishments in Detroit measured at 88 (Figure 1), which is a level deemed by the Environmental Protection Agency as unhealthy. The EPA recommends anyone should avoid or reduce prolonged exposure or heavy exertion at this level.

The SidePak AM 510 weighs one pound and measures different particle sizes in the air. This small machine measures airborne particle mass-concentration and can be adjusted to capture different particle size.

A statewide poll, conducted by Troy, Mich.-based John Bailey & Associates on behalf of CSA in March 2005 found that nearly two-thirds of Michigan registered voters polled favor a new law creating smokefree environments in all Michigan workplaces.

“Many patrons and employees are still not aware of the serious health risks associated with secondhand smoke exposure,” said Stewart. “Secondhand smoke exposure at work causes bar and restaurant employees to be 50 percent more likely to develop lung cancer than the general population. It also will cause 12,000 otherwise healthy nonsmokers to die from some form of cancer, 3,000 specifically to lung cancer.”

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In 2004, a 19-year-old female waitress working at a Detroit bar died from an asthma attack. Secondhand smoke is a known contributor to asthma and asthma attacks.

The campaign represents a bipartisan approach to making Michigan smokefree. Sens. Ray Basham (D-Taylor) and Tom George (R-Kalamazoo Township) along with Reps. Barb Vander Veen (R-Allendale) and Brenda Clack (D-Flint) are each sponsoring measures to make workplaces, restaurants and bars smokefree. Sen. Basham is sponsoring Senate Bill 394, Sen. George is sponsoring SB 395, Rep. Vander Veen is sponsoring House Bill 4624 and Rep. Clack is sponsoring HB 4625. The legislation was introduced in April 2005, and awaits committee action.

The Campaign for Smokefree Air is a grassroots coalition founded by the American Cancer Society, American Heart Association and American Lung Association of Michigan, as well as other statewide groups who support eliminating secondhand smoke dangers in workplaces, restaurants and bars. For more information about the Campaign for Smokefree Air, please visit www.MakeMIAirSmokefree.org.

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