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Air Quality in Kalamazoo Area Restaurants Deemed Unhealthy

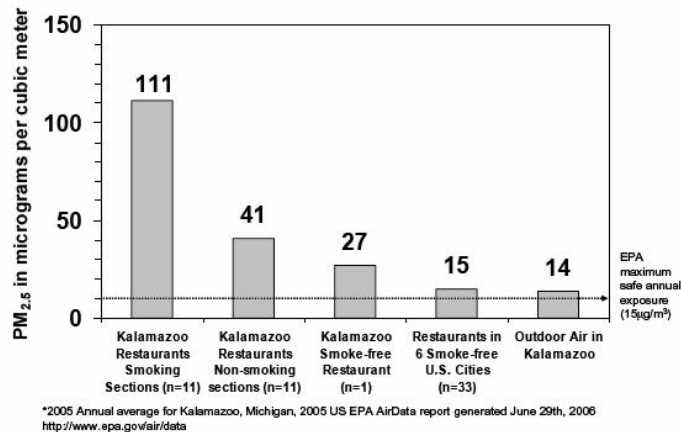
Campaign for Smokefree Air continues its push for smokefree worksites around the state

Lansing, Mich. – The Campaign for Smokefree Air (CSA) received the results of an air quality survey recently completed in Kalamazoo that revealed how patrons who sit in nonsmoking sections in restaurants or bars are not protected from deadly toxins found in secondhand smoke.

The CSA Air Quality Tour visited 12 bars and restaurants between March 24 and April 1, 2006. Results from the tests show that restaurants in the area average a fine particle air pollution level of 111, which the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) deems unhealthy and people with heart or lung disease, older adults, children and everyone else should avoid prolonged or heavy exertion. The EPA deems healthy air quality levels at 15 and below.

“Results from the Kalamazoo air quality testing prove that nonsmoking sections do not provide a strong enough barrier against secondhand smoke,” said Judy Stewart, campaign manger for Campaign for Smokefree Air (CSA). “Looking at the high level of air pollution also reveals that restaurant workers are exposed to deadly toxins every day regardless of whether they work in the smoking or nonsmoking sections.”

Average Fine Particle Air Pollution in Kalamazoo, MI



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The bars and restaurants were visited and assessed from March 24 through April 1, 2006, using the TSI SidePak AM510 Personal Aerosol Monitor. PM_{2.5} levels in designated smoking areas of 11 restaurants were compared to levels in nonsmoking areas, and to one smokefree restaurant in Kalamazoo. Levels were also compared to similar locations in cities with smokefree air laws, and to outdoor air in Kalamazoo.

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 seven times higher in the smoking sections of Kalamazoo, MI restaurants compared to restaurants in smoke-free cities around the United States.
- The amount of air pollution in the non-smoking sections was 63 percent lower than in the smoking sections but still three times higher than in restaurants in smoke-free cities. This study demonstrates non-smoking sections do not protect patrons from exposure to secondhand smoke.
- This study documented significant harmful levels of secondhand smoke, a known human toxin and carcinogen, in Kalamazoo restaurants. Policies that prohibit smoking in all parts of all public worksites dramatically reduce secondhand smoke exposure and improve worker and patron health.

The United States Surgeon General recently released a report on the deadly effects of secondhand smoke. The Surgeon General's report found that ventilation systems and "smoke eaters" merely eliminate the smell of smoke they do not eliminate the harmful toxins contained in secondhand smoke. The report stated that only smokefree establishments can completely protect adults and children from the toxins contained in secondhand smoke.

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“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.”

CSA is working with a bipartisan team of state lawmakers to make 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 0394, Sen. George is sponsoring SB 0395, 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.

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

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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