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Saginaw residents not protected from deadly exposure to toxins in nonsmoking sections of local restaurants

Campaign for Smokefree Air release startling air quality results for Saginaw area

Lansing, Mich. – Saginaw 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.

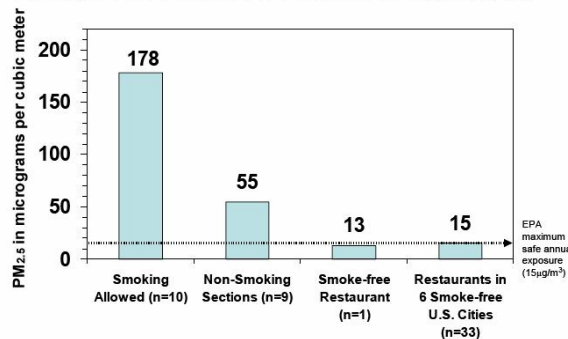
CSA tested 11 restaurants and bars in the Saginaw area in February 2006, both smoking and nonsmoking sections and a smokefree establishment, to measure the indoor air quality for patrons and employees. The results were just made available this week and showed Saginaw residents may mistakenly think that nonsmoking sections offer protection from secondhand smoke exposure and its deadly toxins.

“Results from the Saginaw air quality testing prove that nonsmoking sections do not provide a strong enough barrier against deadly smoke intake 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. This has been a common trend with all our air quality results thus far.”

The average of the locations visited in Saginaw measured at 178 (Figure 1), which federal regulation deems as very unhealthy.

Figure 1

Average Fine Particle Air Pollution in Saginaw, MI



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The 11 bars and restaurants were visited and assessed on February 1, 2, 3 and 5, 2006, using the TSI SidePak AM510 Personal Aerosol Monitor. PM_{2.5} levels in these locations were compared to similar locations in cities with smokefree air laws and to outdoor air quality in Saginaw. The 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 12 times higher where smoking was allowed in Saginaw compared to restaurants in smokefree cities around the United States.
- The amount of air pollution in the nonsmoking sections is four times higher than in restaurants in smokefree cities.
- The average of all the establishments where smoking was allowed in Saginaw measured at 178 (Figure 1), which is a level deemed by the Environmental Protection Agency as very unhealthy. The EPA recommends anyone who has heart or lung disease, older adults and children should avoid all physical activity at this level. Everyone else should avoid prolonged or heavy exertion.

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.

To make Michigan smokefree, CSA is sponsoring legislation to ensure smokefree work environments, including bars and restaurants, with House Bills 4624 and 4625 and Senate Bills 394 and 395. Michigan residents have and want the right to breathe clean, healthy, smokefree air while working.

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.

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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.

“Saginaw County has recently passed a smokefree workplace regulation that states that businesses may allow smoking in designated ventilated areas in outdoor structures and in some company cars,” Stewart said. “Our goal is to protect all Michigan workers, including bar and restaurant employees, from the deadly toxins of secondhand smoke. Ventilation systems will not protect Michigan residents from the cancer-causing effects of secondhand smoke and the thousands of harmful particulates it carries into the lungs of workers. Even the best ventilators are incapable of removing the free-floating poisons of secondhand smoke. The leading manufacturer of ventilation products in the country, Honeywell, Inc. will not support Big Tobacco’s claims that ventilation removes the toxins in secondhand smoke from the air.”

CSA 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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