

OHSR_Reg (SM)

From: Jerry Steinberg
Sent: Friday, May 12, 2000 9:56 PM
To: OHSR_Reg@wcb.bc.ca
Subject: Protecting workers from Second-Hand Smoke

Policy & Regulation Development Bureau
Workers' Compensation Board of British Columbia
P.O. Box 5350, Station Terminal
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Dear Policy & Regulation Development Bureau:

Please forgive me if I don't use the tobacco industry-coined term "Environmental Tobacco Smoke (ETS)," as I find that it tends to lend an air of innocuousness to a very noxious, toxic combination of chemicals. Instead, I prefer "Second-Hand Indoor Tobacco Smoke," which also forms a more descriptive acronym.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has found that Second-Hand Indoor Tobacco Smoke is as toxic as asbestos, benzene, radon, vinyl chloride and arsenic, and has placed Second-Hand Indoor Tobacco Smoke in the same category -- that of a Group A carcinogen. This classification has been used for only 15 other substances.

The British Medical Journal has determined that more than 60% of all crib deaths (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) could be prevented if people stopped exposing babies and pregnant women to tobacco smoke.

Referring to EPA scientist James Repace's work on Second-Hand Indoor Tobacco Smoke, RJ Reynolds Tobacco scientist Dr. Anthony Colucci stated, "We anticipate that if Repace runs true to form, there will be a good deal of media copy written about their analyses and thus we should begin eroding confidence in this work as soon as possible." (Feb. 25, 1985 letter quoted in The Wall Street Journal, April 28, 1998)

Bennett LeBow of the Liggett Group testified in Philip Wiley's lawsuit against the tobacco industry that he believes cigarettes are addictive. When asked about the Environmental Protection Agency's estimate that 3,000 nonsmokers die from lung cancer per year as a result of Second-Hand Indoor Tobacco Smoke exposure, LeBow stated he had "no reason to disagree with that." The lawsuit alleged that Mildred Wiley, a nonsmoker, contracted lung cancer as a result of secondhand smoke exposure in the workplace. (O'Neill, J.R., "Tobacco firm owner takes the stand," Indianapolis Star, February 24, 1998)

Some people think that moving smokers to one side of a room is enough to protect non-smokers from exposure to Second-Hand Indoor Tobacco Smoke. If you think that a so-called "non-smoking area" that shares the same airspace as a designated smoking area is workable, picture a swimming pool, part of which is designated a urinating area and the other part a non-urinating area. Does the pollution know where to stop? Does the pollution respect some abstract boundary? Of course not! The pollution will surely circulate with air/waterflow and will permeate the entire room/swimming pool. And, contrary to what the tobacco industry and some manufacturers claim, even the most elaborate and expensive air cleaners aren't able to remove the minute particles and the numerous poisonous gases in tobacco smoke. The only solution to smoking pollution is a total ban on smoking in all indoor workplaces. After all, if smokers can't be expected to STEP outside to smoke, how can you reasonably expect non-smokers to STAY outside to breathe?

"Providing enough ventilation (air changes per hour) to eliminate all deleterious effects of ETS on non-smokers would create a virtual windstorm indoors. Air cleaning devices or desktop smokeless ashtrays are not effective in reducing the concentration of tobacco smoke in a space. High efficiency air cleaners are only capable of reducing, but not eliminating smoke particles in room air, and are not at all effective for gases. The

best and most effective way to maintain indoor air quality is to control the source of the pollutant. in the case of environmental tobacco smoke, this means restricting smoking to separately ventilated spaces, or banning smoking indoors -- a less costly alternative." (Question & Answer Sheet No. 5, Smoking in the Workplace: Ventilation. An interview with James L. Repace, Physicist, Indoor Air Program, U.S. EPA)

"Workers should not be involuntarily exposed to tobacco smoke. To prevent worker exposure to any hazardous substance, employers should first eliminate hazardous workplace emissions at their source." (U.S. National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, June, 1991)

While smoke-free bars and restaurants are a pleasure for customers, customers stay in such places for a relatively short time. If a restaurant or bar is too smoky, customers have the option of going elsewhere. Workers, on the other hand, are in their workplace for at least eight hours every day, some are there much longer, and many often don't have the option of working elsewhere. Hospitality workers deserve the same protection from exposure to workplace hazards as all other workers.

When asbestos is discovered in a workplace, does the Workers' Compensation Board remove it from only one part of the workplace? Do you have a ventilation and filtration system installed? Or do you have every bit of it removed from every part of the workplace?

The same should be true of Second-Hand Indoor Tobacco Smoke.

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