

For Immediate Release
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Institute of Medicine Confirms Growing Concerns Regarding the Dangers of Secondhand Smoke

BOISE, ID (Oct 16, 2009) A growing list of scientifically based studies shows that comprehensive smoke-free laws covering all workers save lives. These latest findings suggest that tens of thousands of heart attacks could be prevented each year. States and local communities that do not have comprehensive smoke-free laws could have significant cardiovascular health benefits by doing so.

"Smokefree Idaho believes the most important thing local government officials can do to protect vulnerable workers is to pass local ordinances covering all employees from the dangers that secondhand smoke. Two hundred and twenty people die in Idaho each year due to the impact of second hand smoke. Smoke-free laws save lives," said Shauneen Grange, Smokefree Idaho Campaign Coordinator.

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) report, "Secondhand-Smoke Exposure and Cardiovascular Effects: Making Sense of the Evidence," confirms that secondhand smoke could cause heart attacks and smoke-free laws prevent heart attacks and save lives.

The report validates the elimination of smoking in workplaces, restaurants, bars, and other public places is an effective way to protect Americans from the health effects of secondhand smoke, particularly on the cardiovascular system. The IOM also concluded that the evidence is compelling, even brief secondhand smoke exposure could trigger a heart attack.

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States. Nearly three of four U.S. adults have at least one major risk factor for heart disease. Yet, only 40 percent of Americans live in areas with comprehensive state or local laws that ban smoking in public places. These findings suggest tens of thousands of heart attacks could be prevented each year, especially in states and local communities that have comprehensive smoke-free laws, potentially resulting in significant cardiovascular health benefits.

There's no time to waste with this many lives at stake. It is time to mount a full-scale assault on the tobacco epidemic and eliminate all exposure to secondhand smoke. Smoke-free laws are one of the most readily available and cost-effective methods for preventing heart attacks, heart disease-related illnesses and deaths, and reducing health care costs. The only way to protect nonsmokers from the dangerous chemicals in secondhand smoke is to protect workers and the public through comprehensive smoke-free laws.

For information on quitting, visit http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/quit_smoking/index.htm. For the latest resources and information on protecting yourself from secondhand smoke, visit http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/secondhand_smoke/index.htm. To view the full IOM report, visit http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=12649.

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About Smokefree Idaho: Smokefree Idaho is a grassroots movement of individuals and organizations who support making all indoor public and work places 100% smokefree -- including bars -- in order to protect all workers from the dangers of secondhand smoke. For more information visit www.smokefreeidaho.org