



**ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES**

Media Release

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Arkansas' Clean Indoor Air Act on Target According to the Surgeon General Report

June 27, 2006, Little Rock, AR..... U.S. Surgeon General Richard H. Carmona today issued a comprehensive scientific report which concludes that there is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke. Non-smokers exposed to secondhand smoke at home or work increase their risk of developing heart disease by 25 to 30 percent and lung cancer by 20 to 30 percent. The finding is of major public health concern due to the fact that nearly half of all non-smoking Americans are still regularly exposed to secondhand smoke.

The report, *The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke*, finds that even brief secondhand smoke exposure can cause immediate harm. The report states the only way to protect non-smokers from the dangerous chemicals in secondhand smoke is to eliminate smoking indoors.

"The report is a crucial warning sign to non-smokers and smokers alike," Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt said. "Smoking can sicken and kill, and even people who do not smoke can be harmed by smoke from those who do."

Although the report was released June 27, Arkansas leaders have long known there's no safe level of secondhand smoke. In an effort to better protect the health of Arkansans, legislators voted to approve the Clean Indoor Air Act in April. The Clean Indoor Air Act will take effect on July 21, making it illegal to smoke in enclosed workplaces and public places. Not only will the law restrict indoor smoking, but it will also protect Arkansans from the dangers of secondhand smoke.

"This report verifies what we've been saying all along; there are serious and deadly consequences of secondhand smoke," said Governor Mike Huckabee. "The Surgeon General has made it clear that secondhand smoke is not just an annoyance; it's a health hazard, especially for children. In less than a month, the Clean Indoor Air Act will take effect in Arkansas, enabling us to protect those who choose not to smoke from the dangers of secondhand smoke. I'm very proud that Arkansas has already acted to protect our citizens with the Clean Air Act even in advance of this ground-breaking report."

Secondhand smoke exposure can cause heart disease and lung cancer in non-smoking adults and is a known cause of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), respiratory problems, ear infections, and asthma attacks in infants and children, the report finds.

“The health effects of secondhand smoke exposure are more pervasive than we previously thought,” said Surgeon General Carmona, Vice Admiral of the U.S. Public Health Service. “The scientific evidence is now indisputable: secondhand smoke is not a mere annoyance. It is a serious health hazard that can lead to disease and premature death in children and non-smoking adults.”

In Arkansas, secondhand smoke is the third-leading cause of preventable death with approximately 575 Arkansans dying each year from someone else’s smoke.

Since the inception of the Stamp Out Smoking campaign, Arkansas has seen many successes. Some of those include but is not limited to:

- Smoking among pregnant women decreased from 18.5 percent to 16.3 percent;
- High school smokers dropped from 35.8 percent to 26.3 percent;
- The increase in Arkansas Tobacco Control Board enforcement officers has helped decrease the violation rate for illegal sales to minors from 17.5 percent to less than 10 percent;
- The percent of the states’ workforce reporting a smoke-free worksite policy has increased by more than 16% from 2001 to 2004, an increase larger than that observed nationally or among its neighboring states

To help communicate the report findings as widely as possible, the Surgeon General unveiled an easy-to-read guide with practical information on the dangers of secondhand smoke and steps people can take to protect themselves.

Copies of *The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke: A Report of the Surgeon General* and related materials are available on the Surgeon General’s Web site at www.surgeongeneral.gov.

For additional information about Arkansas’ Clean Indoor Air Act, visit www.ArCleanAir.com or call 1-800-235-0002.

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