

Press Release (7/13/2006)

<http://www.cancer.gov/newscenter/pressreleases/smoke-freepolicyrelease>

<http://www.nih.gov/news/pr/jul2006/nci-13.htm>

NCI Announces New Smoke-free Meeting Policy to Address Major Public Health Hazard

The National Cancer Institute (NCI), part of the National Institutes of Health, today announced a new policy requiring that all meetings and conferences organized or primarily sponsored by NCI be held in a state, county, city, or town that has adopted a comprehensive smoke-free policy, unless specific circumstances justify an exemption. NCI's policy is based on extensive scientific data, summarized recently in the U.S. Surgeon General's report, *The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke*, indicating that secondhand smoke (also known as environmental tobacco smoke) causes premature death and disease in children and in adults who do not smoke.

Surgeon General Richard Carmona, M.D., declared that exposure to secondhand smoke remains "a serious public health hazard," and that there is no safe level of exposure. Research shows that many thousands of adult nonsmokers have died from lung cancer caused by exposure to secondhand smoke. In addition, each year, exposure to secondhand smoke causes an estimated 30,000 to 60,000 cardiovascular deaths in nonsmoking adults as well as serious illness in infants and young children.

The Surgeon General noted that while much progress has been made since the 1980s in reducing exposure to involuntary smoking, more than 126 million Americans are still exposed to secondhand smoke. With its new meeting policy, NCI seeks to raise the public's awareness of the importance of protecting adults and children from secondhand smoke exposure. Effective January 1, 2007, the policy will impact the many NCI-sponsored or organized meetings of 20 or more attendees that occur each year.

NCI has developed a Web site to support meeting planning in smoke-free jurisdictions at <http://dccps.cancer.gov/tcrb/smokefreemeetingpolicy.html>. The site will feature an interactive tool (available in fall 2006) to 1) help NCI employees locate smoke-free venues based on the latest smoking policy information for states, counties, and cities; 2) monitor the implementation of the policy; 3) respond to staff inquiries; and 4) document exceptions to the policy.

"NCI seeks to recognize the contribution of states, counties, cities and towns that have chosen to protect the public, including employees, from secondhand smoke exposure," said Robert Croyle, Ph.D., director of NCI's Division of Cancer Control and Population Sciences. "We hope this policy will encourage other states and cities to do likewise."

The new smoke-free policy does not apply to meetings or conferences for which NCI is not the sole or primary organizer or sponsor and where location arrangements have already been made. There will be certain circumstances under which a meeting is exempt from this policy. These circumstances include the need to hold a meeting in coordination with one that is not sponsored by NCI yet takes place in a location that is not yet smoke free, and the need to conduct site visits to institutions located in places that are not yet smoke free, among other reasons.

###

For more information about cancer, please visit the NCI Web site at <http://www.cancer.gov>, or call NCI's Cancer Information Service at 1-800-4 CANCER (1-800-422-6237).

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/library/secondhandsmoke.

For a Spanish version of this release, please go to <http://www.cancer.gov/newscenter/pressreleases/smoke-freepolicyreleaseSpanish>.