

California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) releases report on secondhand smoking

The California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) recently released an extensive report on the health hazards of environmental (secondhand) tobacco smoke exposure (ETS) showing that secondhand smoke exposure increases the risk of breast cancer in young, primarily pre-menopausal nonsmoking women. The report also confirms and strengthens the evidence showing that SHS causes a wide variety of serious diseases, including lung cancer, fatal heart disease and asthma in adults, numerous respiratory illnesses in children, and negative reproductive outcomes.

The report is the basis for a recommendation that the Air Resources Board of CalEPA list ETS as a toxic air contaminant (TAC), and that CalEPA's Office of Environmental Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) add it to its list of TACs that may disproportionately impact children.

Dr. Armando Peruga, responsible for PAHO's tobacco control program, said that the report is the most comprehensive and exhaustively reviewed report to date on the health impact of secondhand smoke exposure, evaluating not only evidence on health effects but also toxic exposure data. He predicted that the report, like the CalEPA's 1997 assessment of secondhand smoke risks, will become a landmark study for those advocating for the protection of workers from secondhand smoke exposure.

Dr. Peruga also noted that the report was timely, following by a few weeks the announcement by the President of Uruguay that all indoor workplaces in the country, including bars and restaurants, would be required to be 100% smoke-free beginning in March 2006.

"PAHO considers smoke-free environments to be one of the most important tobacco control measures for protecting nonsmokers and reducing tobacco use. We urge health professionals, employers, employees and policy makers to carefully review the conclusions of the CalEPA report in order to guide decisions on protection from secondhand smoke."

The report is available at <http://www.arb.ca.gov/newsrel/nr092905.htm>

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