



Health Department Educates Mississippians on the Dangers of Exposure to Secondhand Smoke

Every year more than 500 Mississippians lose their lives due to health consequences of exposure to secondhand smoke.

"Exposure to secondhand smoke is much more than a nuisance," said Roy Hart, director of the Office of Tobacco Control at the Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH). "In Mississippi, exposure to secondhand smoke remains an alarming public health hazard."

The MSDH is currently leading Smokefree Air Mississippi - a public health initiative that educates Mississippians on the dangers of secondhand smoke and the benefits of smokefree air.

"It's a fact: secondhand smoke causes premature death and disease in children and adults who do not smoke," said Hart. "Even brief exposure to secondhand smoke is harmful. There is absolutely no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke."

According to the 2010 Surgeon General's Report, when inhaling secondhand cigarette smoke, individuals breathe in more than 7,000 chemicals such as Arsenic, Lead and Polonium-210. Hundreds of the chemicals found in secondhand smoke are hazardous and 69 are known to cause cancer.

Exposure of adults to secondhand smoke has immediate adverse effects on the cardiovascular system and causes heart disease and lung cancer.

"Far too many Mississippians are exposed to secondhand smoke in their workplaces every day," said Patsy Ross, director of the Tobacco-Free Coalition of Choctaw, Montgomery and Webster Counties. "Workers should not have to face prolonged exposure to the toxic chemicals found in secondhand cigarette smoke. Mississippi employees should not have to choose between their health and their jobs."

Young children are especially vulnerable to secondhand smoke because their bodies are developing so quickly. Children also take in more secondhand smoke because they breathe more rapidly than adults and often cannot remove themselves from areas where secondhand smoke is present.

According to Ross, eliminating exposure to secondhand smoke is the simplest solution.

"Research shows that simply eliminating smoking in public, indoor spaces fully protects non-smokers from exposure to secondhand smoke," said Ross. "Separating smokers from non-smokers, cleaning the air, and ventilating buildings does not eliminate exposure to secondhand smoke."

For more information on the dangers of secondhand smoke, contact the Tobacco-Free Coalition of Choctaw, Montgomery and Webster Counties at 662-466-0023 or visit www.SmokefreeAirMS.com.