

Suggested Talking Points for Healthcare Providers at Air Quality Press Conferences

General comments about the health effects of secondhand smoke (SHS)

1. The science is clear. There is no longer any debate that SHS is a cause of premature death and disease in nonsmokers. In fact, it is the third leading cause of preventable death in the U.S. (1. firsthand smoking, 2. alcohol, 3. secondhand smoke).
2. Secondhand smoke is more than a nuisance. It is a significant threat to public health. In fact, the CDC issued a health warning in 2004 that ALL persons with heart disease should avoid secondhand smoke.
3. At least 250 chemicals in secondhand smoke are known to be toxic or to cause cancer. Both smoke from the burning end of a cigarette and that exhaled by a smoker are dangerous.
4. Nearly every part of the body is affected by secondhand smoke. People exposed to SHS (especially those who work every day in a smoky environment) are more likely to have heart attacks, many forms of cancer including lung cancer, and respiratory disease such as asthma and emphysema.
5. Give an example from your practice of an **adult nonsmoker** whose disease/death was attributable to secondhand smoke. Examples might include a young adult who had an asthma attack while a patron or worker in a hospitality venue, someone who worked in SHS and had a heart attack at a young age, or a lifetime non-smoker who develops lung cancer. (*Note. Please avoid giving examples of children exposed to SHS in the home since focusing on children and exposure in the home often derails the smoke-free legislation debate. Keep the focus on SHS exposure in the workplace.*)

What the findings of the air quality study mean to our community

6. The findings from this important air quality study in ____County/City are a wakeup call for all of us who care about the health of our community. Levels of indoor air pollution are dangerously high and it is putting our friends and family members at serious health risk every time they go to work.
7. Unsafe air also costs taxpayers and insurance holders excess health care costs every year. (*Estimated U.S. costs are \$10 billion per year treating nonsmokers who have been exposed to secondhand smoke; \$5 billion in direct health care and \$5 billion in lost productivity*)
8. We have a public health emergency on our hands. Let's work to clear the air in ____County!

A few cautions:

- **Stay on the Secondhand Smoke message** and avoid talking about the dangers of first-hand smoking. Smoke-free policy doesn't take away people's right to smoke; it prohibits them from smoking where others breathe the secondhand smoke.
- **Drive home the worker health message.** Avoid comments on protecting children or even using children as examples of those hurt by SHS. Opposition forces quickly sidetrack the debate to home and car exposure, implying that smoke-free advocates want laws that extend to personal homes and cars. All workers deserve to breathe clean air!

*For more information, contact the Kentucky Center for Smoke-free Policy
University of Kentucky College of Nursing, 859-323-4587 or www.kcsp.uky.edu.*