

Tobacco-Free COLLABORATIVE

SAN JOSE

THE CASE FOR SMOKE-FREE CITY PARKS IN SAN JOSE

BACKGROUND

The city of San Jose has made great strides toward fostering a healthy community. Fewer than 13 percent of city residents smoke cigarettes and informal surveys show the vast majority prefer smoke-free environments. That's why the Tobacco-Free Collaborative is encouraging city leaders to make all city parks smoke-free.

The San Jose Tobacco-Free Collaborative is a group of community agencies working to reduce the impact of tobacco use and addiction in our community. Tobacco use is still the number one preventable cause of death and disease. Protecting people from secondhand smoke is one way to reduce the impact.

Secondhand or environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) is no longer considered just an unpleasant side effect of cigarette smoking. In 1993, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency determined that secondhand smoke causes cancer in humans and studies by James Repace show that secondhand smoke is harmful even outdoors.

California state law currently prohibits smoking or disposing of any tobacco-related products within 25 feet of a playground or tot lot sandbox area. Violations are infractions punishable by a fine of \$250. In the last five years, the cities of Beverly Hills, Carson, El Monte, Huntington Beach, Pasadena, San Fernando, San Francisco, and Santa Monica have passed local ordinances that cover all park areas in their entirety "from curb to curb" and establish infractions of \$100 to \$250 per violation.

CASE POINTS

Nonsmokers have the right to breathe smoke-free air in public places, including outdoor venues such as city parks.

- The state law does not go far enough as tobacco smoke drifts outside of playground areas and a variety of events are held in San Jose city parks (Christmas in the Park) that draw large numbers of families but do not fall under the tot lot law.
- Kids should be able to play and attend events with their families without being directly exposed to the harmful effects of secondhand smoke. It's common sense to protect children where they play and socialize.

- The reasons for protecting people, especially children, from secondhand smoke are convincing and overwhelming. Scientific evidence proves that exposure to secondhand smoke poses a serious health risk and there is no safe level of exposure. It is not only dangerous – it can also be deadly – especially for children and adults with asthma or other chronic illnesses.
- Studies have shown that adult smoking behavior significantly influences youth smoking behavior. When children see adults smoking in family-friendly places such as city parks, they see the behavior as acceptable.
- A critical component in addressing youth smoking is showing young people that tobacco use is not considered the norm in adult society. Every day in California, nearly 300 children begin smoking. Of those, 200 will go on to become addicted smokers. Half of those children will die prematurely of smoking-related diseases.
- Cigarette butts are hazardous to children, animals and the environment. Smokers regularly discard their cigarette butts and empty packages on the ground. Small children are at risk of swallowing, choking, or burning themselves with discarded butts and poisoning themselves with the drug nicotine.
- Cigarette butts litter our parks and cleanup is costly to taxpayers.

SECONDHAND SMOKE FACTS

In 1993, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a risk assessment, “Respiratory Health Effects of Passive Smoking: Lung Cancer and Other Disorders,” that classified secondhand smoke or ETS as a Group A carcinogen known to cause cancer in humans.¹ The 1997 California EPA, (CAL EPA) report, “Health Effects of Exposure to Environmental Tobacco Smoke,” confirmed the U.S. EPA’s finding that secondhand smoke is a health risk for children and adults.

Definition

- Secondhand smoke is a mixture of smoke from the burning end of tobacco products and smoke exhaled by smokers.
- Secondhand smoke contains a complex mixture of more than 4,000 chemicals, more than 50 of which are cancer-causing agents known as carcinogens.

Health Effects

- Every year in this country secondhand smoke accounts for an estimated 35,000 to 62,000 deaths in nonsmokers.²
- An estimated 3,000 lung cancer deaths in nonsmokers are caused by secondhand smoke each year.³

Children are especially powerless to control their exposure to tobacco smoke and yet they are the group most adversely affected by it.

- Secondhand smoke may be responsible for the annual onset of between 8,000 and 26,000 new cases of asthma in children.⁴
- Up to 1.6 million doctor visits for middle ear infections can be linked with exposure to secondhand smoke.⁵
- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), the leading cause of death in infants between one month and one year of age, has been linked to secondhand smoke.⁶ Maternal smoking is estimated to double the risk of SIDS.⁷ Cal EPA estimates between 1,900 and 2,700 SIDS deaths annually are associated with secondhand smoke exposure.⁸
- Exposure to secondhand smoke causes 150,000 to 300,000 lower respiratory tract infections per year in children under 18 months of age, resulting in 7,500 to 15,000 hospitalizations⁹.

1 Note: July 17, 1998 U.S. District Judge William L. Osteen Sr. of the middle district of North Carolina ruled on a procedural basis that the EPA used faulty methods in concluding that Environmental Tobacco Smoke (ETS) is a Group A carcinogen. The adverse health effects of ETS on children, also confirmed by the CALEPA study, have not been overturned. The EPA has appealed this decision.

2 California EPA, "Health Effects of Exposure to Environmental Tobacco Smoke," Office of Environmental Health Hazards Assessment, 1997.

3. United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), "Respiratory Health Effects of Passive Smoking: Lung Cancer and Other Disorders," Office of Research and Development, 1992.

4. California EPA, "Health Effects of Exposure to Environmental Tobacco Smoke," Office of Environmental Health Hazards Assessment, 1997.

5. California EPA, "Health Effects of Exposure to Environmental Tobacco Smoke," Office of Environmental Health Hazards Assessment, 1997.

6. California EPA, "Health Effects of Exposure to Environmental Tobacco Smoke," Office of Environmental Health Hazards Assessment, 1997, pg. ES-4.

7. Anderson, H.R. & Cook, DG, "Passive smoking and SIDS: A review of epidemiological evidence," Thorax, Vol. 52, No. 11, November 1997, pp. 1003-1009.

8. California EPA, "Health Effects of Exposure to Environmental Tobacco Smoke," Office of Environmental Health Hazards Assessment, 1997.

9. U.S. EPA, "Respiratory Health Effects of Passive Smoking: Lung Cancer and Other Disorders," Office of Research and Development, 1992.