

SMOKEFREE WORKPLACES: THE ESSENTIAL FACTS

Employers and governments worldwide are taking decisive action to protect workers from the harm caused by secondhand smoke. Hundreds of millions of people worldwide are protected by 100% smokefree policies in their workplace, and this number is growing rapidly.¹ Three major developments are driving the global trend towards smokefree workplace policies:

1. There is overwhelming consensus among medical and scientific authorities worldwide that secondhand smoke is a major public health threat, and that the only effective way to protect the public is to eliminate secondhand smoke from all workplaces and public places.²
2. Smokefree air policies have proven to be popular, effective, and well-respected in diverse places such as France, Hong Kong, Ireland, Italy, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and Uruguay.³
3. The Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) – the international tobacco control treaty – imposes a legal obligation on the more than 150 countries⁴ that have ratified the treaty to adopt effective smokefree air laws.⁵ Guidelines adopted by the treaty's governing body in 2007 make it clear that only comprehensive smokefree air laws will meet the treaty's requirements.⁶

Health Risks of Secondhand Smoke

Secondhand smoke, also known as environmental tobacco smoke, is a complex mixture of some 4,000 chemical compounds, including almost 70 known or probable human carcinogens.⁷ Health and scientific authorities around the world agree that secondhand smoke is a serious threat to human health and that effective action must be taken to reduce exposure. Their conclusions include:

- The International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimates that each year about 200,000 workers die because of exposure to secondhand smoke in the workplace.⁸
- Secondhand smoke is a major cause of disease in non-smokers, including lung cancer, coronary heart disease, and cardiac death.⁹
- There is no safe level of exposure to tobacco smoke.¹⁰
- Food service workers have a significantly greater risk of dying from lung cancer than the general population, in part because of secondhand smoke exposure in the workplace.¹¹

- Cadmium, benzene, lead, and arsenic are just a few of the over 4,000 hazardous chemical components of secondhand smoke that are also toxins common to blue-collar workplaces. Synergistically, cigarette smoke and workplace toxins can multiply the risk of getting lung cancer by as much as 53 times in blue-collar workers.¹²

Smokefree policies save lives and protect employee health.

- Numerous studies have documented significant declines in hospital admissions for heart attacks following the implementation of comprehensive smokefree laws.¹³
- Respiratory symptoms among bar workers in Scotland decreased by 26 percent after smokefree legislation was implemented in 2006; asthmatic bar workers experienced reduced airway inflammation and reported an improved quality of life.¹⁴
- Seven out of every 10 smokers want to quit smoking,^{15, 16} and smokefree policies can help smokers quit successfully by reducing environmental triggers and not allowing smoking to be the norm.¹⁷
- A review¹⁸ of smokefree workplaces internationally concluded that smokefree workplaces lead to:
 - A four percent decrease in the number of smokers
 - Three fewer cigarettes a day smoked by continuing smokers

Only comprehensive smokefree policies are effective at eliminating exposure to secondhand smoke; partial measures do not work.

- Guidelines for implementing the FCTC's legally binding smokefree air requirements call for 100% smokefree indoor workplaces and public places and declare that the use of ventilation, filtration, and "designated smoking areas" are not effective.¹⁹
- The US Surgeon General has concluded that ventilation and filtration technologies and separation of smokers and non-smokers within the same air space do not provide effective protection from the health risks of secondhand smoke.²⁰
- The same report concluded that exposure of non-smokers to secondhand smoke cannot be controlled by air cleaning or mechanical air exchange.

Smokefree policies are good for business.

- Well-designed, independent studies have shown that smokefree laws do not have a negative economic impact on the hospitality or tourism industry.²¹
- Benefits for employers include increased employee productivity, reduced sickness in employees from smoking and secondhand smoke exposure, reduced injuries, and reduced risk of fire damage. In Taiwan, such benefits have been quantified at over US \$1 billion a year.²²
- If all US workplaces were smokefree, it would save over \$60 million in medical costs within the first year and an estimated \$280 million in the first seven years.²³
- In New York City, business tax receipts in the city's bars and restaurants increased by 8.7 percent and hospitality sector jobs increased by more than 10,000 in the first year after the city's smokefree law took effect.²⁴

Smokefree compliance rates are high.

- The overwhelming majority of people and businesses comply with smokefree laws. Typically, compliance levels are higher than 90 percent.²⁵

Table 1

Compliance rates in smokefree jurisdictions	
England	98% ²⁶
Ireland	94% ²⁷
Italy	98.5% ²⁸
Massachusetts	96.3% ²⁹
New York City	97% ³⁰
New Zealand	97% ³¹
Norway	97% ³²
Ottawa	95% ³³
Scotland	94.2% ³⁴
Wales	98% ³⁵

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