

News Release

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LA County Reveals Secondhand Smoke Dangers for Non-Smokers in Multi-Unit Housing

Toxic Tobacco Smoke Particle Levels Comparable to a Smoky Casino Found in Apartments and Condos of Non-Smokers

LOS ANGELES, CA, Nov 16, 2011 (MARKETWIRE via COMTEX) -- The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health today unveiled the preliminary results of research showing residents of multi-unit housing may be exposed to dangerous levels of secondhand smoke in their homes, even if they are non-smokers. The research, performed by Stanford researcher Dr. Neil Klepeis and presented today at a smoke-free housing forum at the Children's Hospital of Los Angeles, measures tobacco smoke particle levels and movement in both new and old apartments and condos in Los Angeles County. Key preliminary research findings include:

-- Tobacco smoke particles travel from unit to unit through cracks in fixtures, electrical outlets, pipes, vents and baseboards; as through shared ventilation systems and windows.

As much as 30-50 percent of air comes from other units.

Both old and new buildings are affected.

Tobacco smoke particles in units of non-smokers can reach significant levels equal to and exceeding those of a smoky bar or casino.

"This study has serious implications for the millions of Los Angeles County residents living in multi-unit structures," said Dr. Jonathan E. Fielding, director and health officer of the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. "Even if you are a non-smoker, you and your family might still be exposed to toxic levels of tobacco smoke at all hours of the day inside your own home. We must work

harder to protect the health of our residents from this involuntary exposure to secondhand smoke."

In Los Angeles County, more than 41 percent of housing units are multi-unit structures. As smoke drifts between neighboring apartments, it leaves residues and fine particulate matter that cling to furniture, clothing, rugs, walls and floors and can linger for months, forming dangerous carcinogens. Secondhand smoke exposure is the third leading cause of preventable death in the U.S., responsible for heart disease and lung cancer in non-smoking adults and ear infections, respiratory complications and risk of sudden infant death syndrome in children.

According to the 2007 Los Angeles County Health Survey, the majority of Los Angeles County residents support smoke-free housing. Approximately 60 percent of smokers and 77 percent of non-smokers reported believing that there should be a law requiring separate smoking and non-smoking units in multi-unit housing. But eliminating smoking completely in indoor spaces is the only way to fully protect non-smokers from secondhand smoke exposure. Separating smokers from non-smokers, cleaning the air and ventilating buildings does not eliminate tobacco smoke transfer from occurring in multi-unit structures.

At today's forum, Public Health officials also honored Los Angeles County policymakers who have taken action to implement smoke-free housing ordinances, including Calabasas Mayor Pro Tem Mary Sue Maurer, South Pasadena Councilmember David Sifuentes, Baldwin Park Mayor Pro Tem Marlen Garcia and Compton City Attorney Craig Cornwell, and urged other cities to do the same.

To help people who currently smoke, have already quit or want to help a friend or relative kick this deadly addiction, Angelenos can visit LAQuits.com for information and resources about quitting smoking, or call 1-800-NO-BUTTS for free and confidential telephone counseling that has proven to double a smoker's chances of successfully quitting than if the smoker tried to do it alone. The service, available in English, Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, and TDD/TYY, also assists those trying to quit chewing tobacco and has experts to help teens and pregnant women quit. Additional information and smoking cessation tips can be found on the LA Quits Facebook page and Twitter @LAQuits.

About LA County Department of Public Health The LA County Department of Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of the nearly 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control, and community and family health. Public Health comprises more than 4,000 employees and an annual budget exceeding \$750 million. To learn more about Public Health, visit publichealth.lacounty.gov, visit the YouTube channel at youtube.com/lapublichealth, find Public Health on Facebook at facebook.com/lapublichealth, or follow Public Health on Twitter: LAPublicHealth.

SOURCE: Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Tobacco Control and Prevention Program

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