

STATE OF COLORADO

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Dedicated to protecting and improving the health and environment of the people of Colorado

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Colorado Workplaces Safer After Smoke-Free Law *Research proves remarkable improvement in air quality*

DENVER – Colorado has been smoke-free for almost one year, and already the significant health impacts are being seen in workplaces around the state. A recent study by the State Tobacco Education and Prevention Partnership (STEPP) found that the air pollution in hospitality venues including bars and restaurants has improved by nearly 70 percent since the Colorado Clean Indoor Air Act took effect last July.

The most dramatic improvement to air quality was seen in bars and taverns. Before the smoke-free law, employees and patrons in those venues were exposed to an “unhealthy” level of indoor air pollution, according to EPA ratings. After the law, the air quality improved by 90 percent to receive an EPA rating of “good,” which indicates that the air pollution poses little or no health risk.

Air quality in restaurants that previously allowed smoking improved by 25 percent after the law’s implementation, and family entertainment venues such as bowling alleys and arcades improved by 52 percent.

Casinos, which are currently exempt under the smoke-free law, retained an “unhealthy” level of air pollution, according to EPA ratings. This level indicates that everyone in the venue could experience health effects from the secondhand smoke.

“This study confirms the original intent of the Colorado Clean Indoor Air Act – to protect the health of workers and customers,” said Karen DeLeeuw, director of STEPP. “We know that secondhand smoke causes about 53,000 deaths a year in the United States, so Colorado and other states that have implemented smoke-free laws have gone a long way to help decrease that number.”

The effects of secondhand smoke are no longer in doubt. Last year, the Surgeon General issued a report that concludes there is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke and that eliminating smoking in indoor places protects nonsmokers from exposure to secondhand smoke.

To complete the study, researchers used the TSI SidePak AM510 Personal Aerosol Monitor, which measures the level of respirable suspended particles in the air. It collects an air sample every second and then calculates the average pollution level per minute.

Colorado was the 13th state to enact a smoke-free law. Now that additional states including Arizona, Nevada and Ohio have passed smoke-free initiatives, one in two Americans lives in a place with smoke-free workplaces.

ABOUT STEPP

The State Tobacco Education and Prevention Partnership (STEPP) leads Colorado’s fight against tobacco-caused death, disease and economic burden by mobilizing organizations and individuals to work together to support tobacco-free lifestyles and environments. STEPP and its partners provide programs and policies that are comprehensive, evidence-based, culturally appropriate and cost effective in achieving its goals. The Tobacco Program Evaluation Group (TPEG) is funded by STEPP to conduct research.

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