



Questions & Answers For Website

Q: Why should Illinois be smoke-free?

A: To stop the deadly health effects of secondhand smoke.

According to the U.S. Surgeon General, there is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke. Secondhand smoke kills an estimated 2,900 adults and children in Illinois each year. By creating 100 percent comprehensive clean air legislation, we can make sure all workplaces, including bars and restaurants, will limit workers' exposure to secondhand smoke, creating a healthier environment that will ultimately save lives.

Q: What does this law mean?

A: The new law ensures all indoor public places and places of employment would be smoke-free, thus eliminating the dangers of secondhand smoke.

All workplaces and public places, including restaurants, bars, casinos, bowling alleys, offices and factories will be smoke-free unless specifically exempted.

Q: Are there any exceptions?

A: Yes. The only exceptions are for private residences (as long as they are not used for business open to public or customers), retail tobacco stores in operation prior to passage of this legislation, certain private and semi-private nursing home rooms, and no more than 25 percent of hotel or motel rooms, which can be used to service smoking customers.

Q: When does the law go into effect?

A: January 1, 2008.

Q: Who do I contact to enforce the law?

A: When the law goes into effect next January, Illinois residents will be able to contact local law enforcement or a hotline managed by the Illinois Department of Public Health. More information will be available as we get closer to the effective date.

Q: Will the new law affect Illinois communities that have already gone smoke-free?

A: The law establishes a minimum legal baseline for smoke-free policies. All communities would have to meet the baseline established by the law, but would be free to pass stronger measures.

Q: Will the City of Chicago be smoke-free as of January 1, 2008?

A: Yes, all workplaces including restaurants, bars and restaurant bars will go smoke-free.

Q: What are the real dangers of secondhand smoke?

A: Secondhand smoke kills an estimated 65,000 people nationally each year which includes 2,900 people in Illinois, about eight people per day. It is estimated that for every eight smokers who die from tobacco use, one non-smoker dies from exposure to secondhand smoke. Classified as a Group A carcinogen, a substance known to cause cancer in humans, secondhand smoke is unsafe at any level of exposure.

Q: How many states have gone smoke-free?

A: A total of 24 states, Washington D.C. and Puerto Rico have enacted legislation that requires smoke-free workplaces. There are more than 500 smoke-free cities and counties in the US. Approximately 50 percent of the U.S. population is covered by a 100 percent smoke-free workplace provision.