

Secondhand Smoke in Pennsylvania Casinos: A Study of Nonsmokers' Exposure, Dose, and Risk

James L. Repace, MSc

1. A new study of air pollution in five Pennsylvania casinos shows that casino workers face a higher risk of heart disease and lung cancer because they work in tobacco-smoke polluted building.
2. The research shows that six out of every 10,000 Pennsylvania casino workers will die each year because of exposure to secondhand smoke, according to the study, published on-line today by the American Journal of Public Health.
3. Study author James L. Repace, a Washington DC-area consultant who studies the effects of secondhand smoke, says "Casino workers exposure to secondhand smoke makes them perhaps the single most exposed group in society, along with bartenders. However, he adds, "many states have banned smoking in bars and restaurants while exempting casinos."
4. The study also showed that casino patrons were exposed to elevated levels of cancer-causing substances and absorbed tobacco smoke in their body fluids."
5. While 23 states allow casino gambling, only 8 states ban smoking in casinos. As a result, most casino workers remain at risk. A recent Health Hazard Evaluation by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health of 3 Las Vegas casinos also showed that casino workers absorbed cancer-causing substances from secondhand smoke, and that nearly 25% had asthmatic symptoms.
6. Repace said the total number of casino workers in Pennsylvania is expected to reach as high as 12,000. More than 90 percent of the deaths are expected to be from heart disease, with the rest from lung cancer.
7. Repace reports that an annual death rate of six per 10,000 is roughly 5 times the extra risk of death for mine workers from Pennsylvania mine disasters.
8. The study was sponsored by the Flight Attendant Medical Research Institute through a research grant to Stanford University and also by the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Tobacco (PACT).