



## COUNTY OF BERGEN

JAMES J. TEDESCO III, *County Executive*

# SECONDHAND SMOKE FACT SHEET

- Secondhand smoke is a serious health concern for everyone. Secondhand smoke, also known as Environmental Tobacco Smoke (ETS), is the dangerous combination of the smoke from the burning end of a cigarette, pipe or cigar and the smoke exhaled by a smoker.
- Secondhand smoke contains the same harmful chemicals as the smoke that smokers inhale. It contains more than 4,000 chemicals including 200 poisons and 69 known and probable cancer-causing substances. Among them are arsenic, benzene, carbon monoxide, formaldehyde, hydrogen cyanide, lead, mercury and vinyl chloride.
- Secondhand smoke has been classified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as a Group A carcinogen, a known cause of cancer in humans, putting it in the same category as asbestos, benzene and radon.
- According to the U.S. EPA, each year, secondhand smoke kills an estimated 62,000 nonsmokers in the United States, including approximately 3,000 deaths due to lung cancer and 37,000 deaths due to heart disease. In New Jersey alone, between 1,000 and 1,800 nonsmokers die every year from secondhand smoke.
- Secondhand smoke is especially dangerous to children, particularly for young children with developing respiratory systems. It can cause pneumonia, ear infections, and lower respiratory tract infections. It can irritate a child's asthma and allergies causing longer and more severe attacks and is also linked to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Smoking by parents causes respiratory symptoms and slows lung growth in their children.
- Secondhand smoke is harmful to children with asthma. The EPA estimates that each year 200,000 to 1,000,000 children have their asthma worsened by secondhand smoke.
- Current heating, ventilating and air conditioning systems alone cannot control exposure to secondhand smoke. No ventilation system adequately removes secondhand smoke from the air.

### Sources:

- American Cancer Society
- New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services Comprehensive Tobacco Program
- The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke: A Report of the Surgeon General-2006

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