



NEWS RELEASE

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Week Two of *Home Indoor Air Quality Month* Focuses on the Effects of Secondhand Smoke

BISMARCK, N.D. – Week two of *Home Indoor Air Quality Month* is Secondhand Smoke Awareness Week and is a great time to remind families about the negative impact that secondhand smoke can have on their loved one's health, according to Karalee Harper, director of the North Dakota Department of Health's Division of Tobacco Prevention and Control.

Governor John Hoeven has proclaimed October 2008 as *Home Indoor Air Quality Month* to encourage North Dakotans to learn more about indoor air quality issues.

Secondhand smoke (sometimes called "environmental tobacco smoke") includes the smoke that comes from the burning end of a cigarette or cigar and the smoke exhaled by smokers. It contains more than 4,000 chemicals, many of which can cause cancer.

"Secondhand smoke causes disease and death in children and nonsmoking adults," Harper said. "According to the 2006 Surgeon General's report, there is *no* risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke."

Nonsmoking adults who are exposed to secondhand smoke can develop lung cancer. The EPA reports about 3,000 lung cancer deaths per year in nonsmokers caused by secondhand smoke.

Children are greatly affected when exposed to secondhand smoke. Inhaling the toxins can cause children and infants to:

- Develop asthma; or if they already have asthma, experience more severe and more frequent asthma attacks.
- Suffer from ongoing respiratory ailments, such as pneumonia and bronchitis.

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- Have an increased risk of ear infections.
- Die from sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

Harper offers several tips that families can follow to protect their loved ones from secondhand smoke.

- If you smoke, get help quitting.
- Make sure your home and car are smoke-free.
- Ask people not to smoke around you or your children.
- Make sure your children's school grounds and baby sitter's home are smoke-free.
- Teach your children to stay away from secondhand smoke.
- Avoid exposure to secondhand smoke if you are pregnant.

"If you smoke, the most important thing you can do to protect your family from the effects of secondhand smoke is to get help with quitting," Harper said. "Making the commitment to quit will provide your family with a healthier environment and a healthier future."

Free, confidential help with quitting tobacco is available through the North Dakota Tobacco Quitline which can be reached by calling 1.800.QUIT.NOW (1.800.784.8669.)

For more information about secondhand smoke, contact Karalee Harper, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.4517 or 800.280.5512. For more information about *Home Indoor Air Quality Month*, contact Justin Otto, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.5188.

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