



NEWS RELEASE

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

BISMARCK, N.D. – Week three 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 Chronic Disease.

Governor John Hoeven has proclaimed October 2010 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.

"According to the 2006 Surgeon General's report, there is *no* risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke," Harper said. "The report states that the scientific evidence is indisputable. Secondhand smoke is not a mere annoyance; it is a serious health hazard that can lead to disease and premature death in children and nonsmoking adults."

Exposure to secondhand smoke irritates the airways and has immediate harmful effects on a person's heart and blood vessels. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has issued an advisory warning to all people with a heart condition or those predisposed to heart disease to avoid all indoor environments where smoking is allowed. According to the CDC, secondhand smoke causes an estimated 46,000 premature deaths from heart disease each year in the United States among nonsmokers.

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“Children, especially, are greatly affected by secondhand smoke,” said Harper. “Being exposed to secondhand smoke slows the growth of children’s lungs and can cause them to cough, wheeze and feel breathless.”

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

“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,” said Harper. “North Dakotans can receive free, confidential help with quitting tobacco through the North Dakota Tobacco Quitline and North Dakota QuitNet.”

Call the North Dakota Tobacco Quitline at 1.800.QUIT.NOW (1.800.784.8669) for telephone-based assistance, or log on to North Dakota QuitNet at www.nd.quitnet.com for online assistance. Both services offer professional cessation counseling and free nicotine patches, gum or lozenges for those who qualify.

For more information about secondhand smoke, contact Karalee Harper or Michelle Walker, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.2367 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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