

New Jersey Municipalities Continue To Adopt Smoke-Free Air Ordinances

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Perth Amboy is among latest to adopt smoking restriction

STATE — Princeton, Palisades Park, North Bergen, Secaucus, Garfield, Perth Amboy, Kearny and Hopatcong are the latest New Jersey municipalities to adopt outdoor smoke-free air ordinances covering outdoor public recreation areas, state officials announced today.

Currently, 163 municipalities in all 21 counties have smoke-free air ordinances in effect. In addition, nine counties also have adopted ordinances-some cover county parks, others apply to all county property and two apply to county zoos-Turtle Back Zoo in West Orange and the Cape May County Zoo. A list of the municipalities and counties is available at www.njgasp.org/Smokefree%20parks%20list.pdf.

The municipal and county ordinances cover more than 6.1 million New Jersey residents.

There are health and environmental benefits of smoke-free parks and recreation areas. The ordinances protect the community and non-smokers from exposure and send a clear public health message to children about the harmful effects of tobacco smoke.

“Through the combined efforts of these local governments, concerned citizens and public-private partnerships, New Jersey is implementing model public policies that are changing social norms and community behaviors regarding exposure to secondhand tobacco smoke,” said Health Commissioner Mary E. O’Dowd. “These ordinances protect the health of all New Jerseyans, especially infants, children and the elderly who are particularly susceptible to the harmful effects of secondhand smoke.”

There is no safe level of exposure to secondhand tobacco smoke, according to the U.S. Surgeon General. Even brief exposure can trigger health problems for people with asthma and cardiovascular illnesses. Children exposed to secondhand smoke are at increased risk for severe asthma attacks, bronchitis, painful ear infections, pneumonia and sudden infant death syndrome.

The New Jersey Department of Health’s Office of Cancer Control and Prevention (OCCP) and the Office of Tobacco Control (OTC) are working with New Jersey municipalities to educate communities and offer assistance to help implement smoke-free outdoor air ordinances.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) labeled this collaboration a “success story” in coordinating grantees and advocates to educate stakeholders and policy makers about the dangers of secondhand smoke and need to reduce exposure in outdoor public recreational spaces. A “Smoke-Free Policy Toolkit” and local advocacy groups called Integrated Municipal Advisory Councils provide guidance to local officials in increasing the number of smoke-free outdoor air ordinances.

The Department provides more than \$850,000 in grants to seven organizations which support this initiative: the American Cancer Society, Atlantic Prevention Resources, the Center for Prevention and Counseling, the Global Advisors on Smoke-free Policy (GASP), the Southern NJ Perinatal

Cooperative, University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey and the Vineland Health Department.

Nonsmokers exposed to secondhand smoke inhale many of the same chemicals that smokers inhale. Tobacco smoke contains more than 7,000 chemicals, of which at least 250 are toxic and 70 cause cancer, including formaldehyde, benzene and vinyl chloride.

Secondhand smoke has been designated as a known human cancer-causing agent by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, National Toxicology Program and the International Agency for Research on Cancer.

In addition to the health benefits of clearing the air, outdoor smoke-free air ordinances also lower the risk of children and animals ingesting discarded and toxic cigarette butts, reduce litter and prevent accidental fires.

The DOH offers free “100% smoke-free” signs to municipalities and counties with smoke-free policies covering their parks and recreational areas. The free sign program helps to educate the community and promotes self-enforcement of the policy.

The Department has a free telephone counseling service called NJ Quitline to help people who want to quit smoking. For more information, visit njquitline.org.

Read more: <http://njtoday.net/2013/04/12/new-jersey-municipalities-continue-to-adopt-smoke-free-air-ordinances/#ixzz2QHNMpGOM>