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Pollution in New Jersey Workplaces More than Triple EPA Maximums

Joint report from New Jersey GASP, American Cancer Society and Roswell Park Cancer Institute Reveals that New Jersey's smoke-filled workplaces are, on average, 15 times as polluted as smoke-free sites

TRENTON, N.J. (Nov. 14, 2005) – Unsafe levels of air pollution are smothering many New Jersey workers.

New Jersey's smoke-filled workplaces and public places are, on average, 15 times more polluted than similar smoke-free sites. Further, employee exposure in these smoke-filled places exceeds the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) annual maximum safe average exposure for outdoor air quality by an average of 3.4 times, according to a new report released today by the New Jersey Group Against Smoking Pollution (GASP) and the American Cancer Society in partnership with the Roswell Park Cancer Institute.

The report details the results of air quality testing by the three organizations, in the largest study ever undertaken in one state. Using state-of-the-art air pollution monitoring devices, research teams tested the air in more than 50 diners, restaurants, bars, bowling alleys, and casinos across New Jersey. The tests measured fine particle air pollution from tobacco smoke and made comparisons with average annual limits set by the EPA.

"Quite simply," said Regina Carlson, Executive Director of New Jersey GASP, the organization that initiated the project, "in many New Jersey workplaces and places that serve the public, the air is not fit to breathe. In one restaurant bar, the air pollution reached a level more than 30 times as high as the pollution on the busy streets outside the restaurant, where cars sat idling, waiting for passengers from a busy commuter rail station at evening rush hour. The highest level of pollution, in one bar, was 160 times as high as the average level of pollution in the smokefree sites."

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"There are no 'safe' levels of environmental tobacco smoke," said Dr. Alfred R. Ashford, chief medical officer, American Cancer Society of New York and New Jersey. "New Jersey workers are unwillingly being poisoned at their workplaces each and every day. Making a living must not be tied to inhaling cancer-causing toxins in the workplace. This report underscores the need for our legislators to take immediate action to advance the New Jersey Smoke-Free Air Act. Our legislators must take steps to protect workers from the proven death and disease associated with tobacco smoke."

The New Jersey test sites were located in 13 of the state's 21 counties, and testing was conducted between Aug. 18 and Sept. 27, throughout the days of the week, and from early morning through midnight and later. Tested sites were in urban, suburban, and rural areas and included blue collar, middle class, and upscale establishments. Some sites were individually owned establishments, some were part of local or national chain entities. The data analysis was performed by Roswell Park Cancer Institute, Buffalo, N.Y., which tested the air in similar smoking-permitted and smoke-free sites in seven major U.S. cities in 2004.

For additional information, please contact New Jersey GASP at 908.273.9368 or the American Cancer Society at 1-800-ACS-2345.

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New Jersey GASP. Smokefree air for nonsmokers, tobacco-free lives for children.

The American Cancer Society is dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major health problem by saving lives, diminishing suffering and preventing cancer through research, education, advocacy and service. The American Cancer Society Eastern Division has 46 community-based offices, involving thousands of volunteers throughout NY and NJ. For 24-hour cancer information, call toll free 1-800-ACS-2345 or visit www.cancer.org