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Policies, Practices & Positions

Public Place Smoking

Reasonable Ways to Minimize Secondhand Smoke

Public health officials have concluded that secondhand smoke from cigarettes causes disease, including lung cancer and heart disease, in non-smoking adults, as well as causes conditions in children such as asthma, respiratory infections, cough, wheeze, otitis media (middle ear infection) and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. In addition, public health officials have concluded that secondhand smoke can exacerbate adult asthma and cause eye, throat and nasal irritation. Secondhand smoke, also known as environmental tobacco smoke or ETS, is a combination of the smoke coming from the lit end of a cigarette plus the smoke exhaled by a person smoking.

The public should be guided by the conclusions of public health officials regarding the health effects of secondhand smoke in deciding whether to be in places where secondhand smoke is present, or if they are smokers, when and where to smoke around others. Particular care should be exercised where children are concerned, and adults should avoid smoking around them.

Philip Morris USA believes that the conclusions of public health officials concerning environmental tobacco smoke are sufficient to warrant measures that regulate smoking in public places. We also believe that where smoking is permitted, the government should require the posting of warning notices that communicate public health officials' conclusions that secondhand smoke causes disease in non-smokers.

We also think that where smoking is permitted, the smoking policy should be clearly communicated. The public can then choose whether or not to frequent places where smoking is permitted. In places where smoking is permitted, business owners should have some flexibility in deciding how best to address the preferences of non-smokers and smokers.

If a business owner decides to accommodate both non-smokers and smokers, we believe that non-smokers should be able to enjoy those places without being bothered by smoke drift or odor, and at the same time adults who choose to smoke should be able to enjoy comfortable and pleasant places in which to smoke.

Business owners who choose to accommodate smoking should reduce secondhand smoke through designating separate areas or separate rooms for non-smokers and smokers and through the use of high-quality ventilation systems to minimize smoke in the air. While not shown to address the health effects of secondhand smoke, ventilation can help improve the air quality of an establishment by reducing the sight and smell of smoke and by controlling smoke drift. At its most basic definition, ventilation is the dilution of unwanted indoor air constituents (such as smoke or odors) with fresh outdoor air.

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