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Oregon bars, bowling centers are following Smokefree Workplace Law, study shows

The majority of Oregon bars and bowling centers are in compliance with the expanded Smokefree Workplace Law, according to a new study. The law, which took effect Jan. 1, 2009, prohibits smoking in indoor workplaces including bars, bowling centers and bingo halls, and creates a 10-foot smokefree zone around doors, windows and ventilation systems in all buildings open to the public.

The study, conducted by the Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS) Tobacco Prevention and Education Program, included a random sample of Oregon bars and bowling centers and found that **all observed establishments were smokefree indoors**. Almost three quarters had signs posted to inform employees and customers of the law's requirements.

"The survey confirms that Oregon has made a smooth transition to smokefree and that the law is effectively protecting Oregonians from secondhand smoke," said Dr. Katrina Hedberg, interim state epidemiologist for the state Public Health Division. "We applaud Oregon bars and businesses for doing their part."

In addition to protecting workers and customers from secondhand smoke exposure, the law is helping people quit. Since January, nearly one in 10 callers to the Oregon Tobacco Quit Line reported that they were motivated to quit smoking because of the new law.

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In Oregon and across the country, there is additional evidence that smokefree policies are good for business as well as for people:

- An American Heart Association study shows that one year after passing smoking bans, communities in North America and Europe had 17 percent fewer heart attacks compared to communities without smoking restrictions, and the number of heart attacks kept decreasing with time.
- Oregon bingo receipts have increased since the law took effect.
- According to the U.S. Surgeon General's 2006 report, "The Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Secondhand Smoke," smokefree policies do not cause a decline in business for restaurants and bars, but do lead to a substantial decline in exposure to secondhand smoke and decreased respiratory symptoms in workers.

To ensure that Oregon's law realizes these benefits, DHS continues to work with businesses on specific issues. For example, the study found that five percent of bars statewide had enclosed outdoor smoking structures that are not in compliance with the law. "With the winter rains beginning, it's important for businesses to remember that smoking is not permitted in any structure with a ceiling and three or more permanent or temporary walls," Dr. Hedberg said. Temporary walls include walls constructed of plastic, mesh or other screening materials, slats, louvered blinds, fabric, blankets or other non-permanent material, according to the law.

Additionally, while the majority of bars had posted signs, only one in five had displayed all required signage. Violations of the 10-foot rule were more common among bars without all required signage. Signs, including a new version reminding patrons not to leave cigarette litter on the ground, are available at <http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/smokefree/thelaw.shtml> or 1-888-412-1701.

Although the Smokefree Workplace Law and the high level of compliance are wins for the tobacco prevention community, there is still more work to be done. Seventeen percent of Oregonians smoke, and 90 percent of them started smoking before they turned 18 years old. Every day, 48 children smoke their first cigarette in Oregon; a year later, 20 will still be smoking.

Background and additional information

Passed by the Oregon Legislature in 2007 and implemented January 1, 2009, the law expands the number of workplaces required to be smokefree to include bars, bowling centers and bingo halls; 75 percent of hotel and motel rooms; and all employee breakrooms. It also prohibits smoking or the presence of ashtrays within 10 feet of any entrance, exit, window or ventilation intake.

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Visit <http://oregon.gov/DHS/ph/tobacco/pubs.shtml> to read the full report.

For more information about how to quit tobacco, visit <http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/tobacco/oregonquitline.shtml>.

For more information about the law and to access free signs and resources, visit <http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/smokefree/thelaw.shtml>.

About TPEP

The Oregon Tobacco Prevention and Education Program works with local health departments, tribes, schools and community organizations to deliver a comprehensive tobacco prevention program to all Oregon residents. These program activities are based on evidence-based strategies to reduce and prevent tobacco use. For more information, visit <http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/tobacco/>.

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