

**For Immediate Release**

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**HEALTH DEPARTMENT ENCOURAGES VERMONTERS TO CREATE SMOKE-FREE ZONES  
New CDC Study Shows Dangers of Exposure to Secondhand Smoke**

**Burlington, VT** – During August and September, the Vermont Department of Health wants to help Vermonters create smoke-free zones to protect both children and adults from being exposed to the dangers of secondhand smoke.

The Health Department's annual two-month "Smoke-Free Zone" campaign follows the July 11 publication of a report in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*. The analysis of secondhand smoke exposure shows that almost half (46 percent) of all nonsmokers have detectable levels of serum cotinine, a biochemical indicator of nicotine, in their systems and that children are four times more likely to be exposed at home than adults. Exposure to secondhand smoke has significantly declined in the past 20 years, but these recent results show that more work is needed to further reduce the harmful health effects of secondhand smoke.

According to the U.S. Surgeon General, no level of exposure to secondhand smoke is safe. Breathing secondhand smoke can cause heart disease and lung cancer in nonsmoking adults. In children, it increases the risk for sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), acute respiratory infections, more severe bouts of asthma and more frequent ear infections.

More than ever before, Vermont smokers – and recent quitters – with children in the home are banning tobacco use in their homes and cars. Last year, 67 percent (up from 43 percent in 2001) banned smoking in their homes while 77 percent (up from 54 percent in 2001) banned it in their cars. Vermonters who are interested in learning more about smoke-free zones can log on to [www.VTQuitNetwork.org](http://www.VTQuitNetwork.org).

"We know that parents and other caregivers are passionate about the health and well-being of their children, so the Vermont Department of Health and partner organizations have developed strategies to help them," said Health Commissioner Wendy Davis, MD. "We're very proud of the work community-based anti-tobacco coalitions are doing to encourage all Vermonters to make their world smoke-free."

The Vermont Department of Health has created two "Smoke-Free Zone" 60-second radio ads, brochures, and a variety of materials to be distributed locally by community coalitions and other partners. Many of the coalitions also are scheduling local events to raise awareness of secondhand smoke.

Civic organizations and towns across Vermont are starting to take action on a local level against secondhand smoke. Examples include:

- Summer Fairs – Local coalitions worked with the organizers of the Vermont State Fair and Addison County Fair & Field Days worked to ban tobacco use except in designated smoking areas.
- Smoke-Free Parks – Local coalitions and town leaders created smoke-free zones in Brattleboro parks as well as in Londonderry's Pingree and Memorial parks.
- Smoke-Free Park Advisories – Although they have not passed town ordinances, local coalitions and leaders in Manchester and St. Johnsbury have posted or will post signs in town parks. At the Dana L. Thompson Memorial Park in Manchester, the Selectboard asked that "Please keep this park a smoke-free zone for children" signs be posted.

Other states and countries are also working to expand their smoke-free spaces. In Bangor, Maine, the city council recently passed an ordinance that prohibits smoking in vehicles when children under the age of 18 are present, with violators subject to a \$50 fine. Even in the legendarily hazy cafes and restaurants of Paris, a smoking ban that took effect on January 2 has made the dining experience in the French capital city surprisingly breathable.

Vermont smokers who are interested in learning more about the support available when considering quitting should contact the [Vermont Quit Network](http://www.VTQuitNetwork.org) by checking out [www.VTQuitNetwork.org](http://www.VTQuitNetwork.org), dialing 1.800.QUIT.NOW (784-8669) or visiting a [Vermont Quit Network](http://www.VTQuitNetwork.org) coach at a local Vermont hospital.

The Vermont Tobacco Control Program is funded by payments from the Master Settlement Agreement and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For more information, visit <http://healthvermont.gov>.

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