

For Immediate Release

Contact: *Joy Blankley Meyer*, Executive Director, Pennsylvania Alliance to Control Tobacco;

Cell: 717-269-2415

October 18, 2007

300 NONSMOKING PENNSYLVANIA CASINO EMPLOYEES WILL DIE
FROM SECONDHAND-SMOKE ILLNESSES, NEW STUDY SAYS

Casinos' air quality "very unhealthy" per OSHA standards

HARRISBURG—Nearly 300 nonsmoking Pennsylvania casino employees will die from lung cancer, heart disease, and other illnesses caused by secondhand smoke, according to a new report on air quality in the state's casinos. Within the next few years, the five currently licensed casinos will employ approximately 12,000 people. Of those 12,000 people, 300 nonsmokers — or about 8 nonsmokers per year — will die during the subsequent 40 years, specifically as a result of exposure to secondhand smoke, if they continue to be exposed, according to the report, issued by internationally renowned secondhand smoke scientist James Repace. Repace said this is 27 times the "Significant Risk" level used by the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration to rank workplace hazards.

"Do we really have to let 300 nonsmokers die because of secondhand smoke before we pass a comprehensive smoking ban?" asks Joy Blankley Meyer, executive director of the Pennsylvania Alliance to Control Tobacco, which commissioned the study. "This new study underscores for our legislators that they must pass a clean indoor air act to protect all Pennsylvania employees."

Repace's report covers two studies conducted in August, which constituted the first ever studies of air quality in Pennsylvania's casinos.

The first study measured air quality, including inhalable secondhand-smoke related carcinogens and other particles, at the Mohegan Sun Casino in Wilkes-Barre, Philadelphia Park Casino in Bensalem, and Harrah's in Chester. Investigators visiting the casinos used purse-sized monitors to measure the particles.

The second study measured the amount of metabolized nicotine (cotinine) in the urine of nonsmoking volunteers before and after they spent four-hour stints in the Philadelphia Park Casino, The Meadows at Meadowlands, and Presque Isle Downs Casino in Erie County.

To standardize results in the air quality study, investigators also recorded factors including the number of people, number of smokers, size of the space, ventilation rates, temperature and humidity.

Based on the findings of the two studies, Repace estimated that the risk to the average worker would be 20 times higher than the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) Significant Risk Level.

“Twenty Seven times OSHA's Significant Risk Level will eventually kill 8 casino workers every year. By comparison, between 1995 and 2002, 16 miners died in Pennsylvania mine disasters, or about 2 per year. We all appreciate that coal mining can be a dangerous job,” Repace said. “Working in a casino should be a safe way to make a living — except that secondhand smoke makes it a hazardous occupation.”

According to a 2006 report from the U.S. Surgeon General, it is indisputable that secondhand smoke causes premature death and serious diseases in nonsmoking adults and children. The report also said that the only way to protect nonsmokers from secondhand smoke is to require smoke-free workplaces and public places, and that smoke-free policies do not have an adverse economic impact on the hospitality industry.

More/

“We already know that 84 percent of Pennsylvanians believe that all workers should be protected from secondhand smoke,” Meyer said. “We also know that casino employees are exposed to particularly high levels of secondhand smoke, dramatically increasing their risk of developing terminal lung and heart disease. Our legislators have a solemn responsibility to protect the citizens of Pennsylvania and this can be accomplished with the passage of a comprehensive clean indoor air law that protects all workers.”

Media Resource List

1. *Joy Blankley Meyer*, Executive Director, Pennsylvania Alliance to Control Tobacco;
Cell: 717-269-2415
3001 Old Gettysburg Road
Camp Hill, PA 17011
www.PACTonline.org
2. *Deborah P. Brown*, Vice President, Community Outreach and Advocacy,
American Lung Association of the Mid-Atlantic
Cell 610-563-6992
dbrown@lunginfo.org
3. *James Repace, Biophysicists*, President, Repace Associates, Bowie, MD
Phone: 302-262-9131, repace@comcast.net