



**National Institute of Occupational Safety & Health (NIOSH)
Health Hazard Evaluation of Blackjack Dealers (May 2009) Talking Points**

In 2005, blackjack dealers working in three Las Vegas casinos stepped forward and filed a NIOSH workplace Health Hazard Evaluation (HHE) request asking NIOSH to investigate secondhand tobacco smoke in their workplaces. NIOSH responded with a research team that conducted indoor air quality tests and biomarker assessments on 100 blackjack dealers in Bally's, Caesars Palace, and Paris casinos on the Las Vegas strip.

The NIOSH Health Hazard Evaluation is now complete and will be available at:
<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/hhe/>

- Casino workers on the Vegas Strip are literally working themselves to death, forced to inhale toxic secondhand smoke as they deal cards for hours at a time unable to leave their assigned table.
- A new report from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) shows workers in Las Vegas casinos are exposed to toxic levels of secondhand smoke at work.
- NIOSH recommends making all casinos in the U.S. 100% smokefree to ensure indoor air within casinos is safe to breathe.
- All workers deserve to breathe smokefree air, and casino workers are no exception.
- Casino workers are at greater risk for lung and heart disease because of secondhand smoke exposure.¹
- Ventilation systems do not protect health. Casino workers even in a "well-ventilated" casino have cotinine (metabolized nicotine) levels 300-600% higher than in other smoking workplaces during a work shift.²
- The average level of cotinine (metabolized nicotine) among nonsmokers increased by 456% and the average levels of the carcinogen NNAL increased by 112% after four hours of exposure to secondhand smoke in a smoke-filled casino with a "sophisticated" ventilation system.³
- Smoke-filled casinos have up to 50 times more cancer-causing particles in the air than highways and city streets clogged with diesel trucks in rush hour traffic. After going smokefree, indoor air pollution virtually disappears in the same environments.⁴
- Smokefree laws have no effect on total gambling revenues or on the average revenue per machine. Despite smokefree opponents' claims of economic doomsday, smokefree laws do not harm casinos or other gambling venues, just as they do not harm restaurants, bars, or bingo parlors. Smoking is an incidental activity.⁵
- Ventilation is not a solution. **Ventilation and air filtration systems do not protect workers or patrons from exposure to secondhand smoke. These systems can reduce odor, but not the health hazards.**
- The **American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE)** position document states: "At present, the only means of effectively eliminating health risks associated with indoor exposure is to ban smoking activity... No

other engineering approaches, including current and advanced dilution ventilation or air cleaning technologies, have demonstrated or should be relied upon to control health risks from ETS [environmental tobacco smoke] exposure in spaces where smoking occurs... Because of ASHRAE's mission to act for the benefit of the public, it encourages elimination of smoking in the indoor environment as the optimal way to minimize ETS exposure."⁶

References:

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