



For Immediate Release

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Being Irish On St. Patrick's Day Means Going Smoke-free, Study Reports
St. Paul Irish Pubs Tested as Part of International Air Quality Study

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn., March 16, 2006 – While only 11 percent of Minnesotans are actually Irish, that doesn't stop many more people from *becoming* Irish on St. Patrick's Day. According to a new study, the best way to "do as the Irish do" is to celebrate the holiday in a smoke-free bar or pub.

A study released today by the Harvard University School of Public Health and other researchers, including the Minnesota Partnership for Action Against Tobacco, measured indoor air pollution levels in Irish pubs around the world and compared them to actual Irish pubs in Ireland, where a nationwide law prohibits smoking in all workplaces, including bars and restaurants. The study measured air pollution levels in 128 Irish pubs in 15 countries, including North America, Europe, Australia and Asia, and found that the average level of air pollution inside Ireland's smoke-free pubs was 91 percent lower than inside Irish pubs located in countries and cities that permit workplace smoking.

In the United States, the study found that Irish pubs in smoke-free cities have 95 percent less air pollution than the pubs in cities that still allow workplace smoking. MPAAT researchers tested four Irish pubs in St. Paul and found air pollution levels that are 20 times higher than those in U.S. smoke-free pubs. St. Paul subsequently passed a comprehensive smoke-free law that will go into effect on March 31.

"The study adds to the strong and growing body of evidence in support of comprehensive smoke-free ordinances as an effective tool to reduce the known dangers of secondhand smoke," said Barbara Schillo, MPAAT Director of Research. "By implementing a comprehensive smoke-free ordinance, St. Paul is taking a significant step toward becoming a healthier city by protecting the health of all workers from secondhand smoke."

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Indoor air pollution measured in the study contains cancer-causing chemicals that are inhaled deeply into the lungs, where they may cause significant damage to people's health. High concentrations of these pollutants are found in secondhand smoke, which causes 38,000 non-smokers to die from heart disease and lung cancer each year. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has advised persons with heart disease to avoid settings where smoking is allowed because even 30 minutes of exposure can have serious health consequences.

“We know from the Minnesota Adult Tobacco Survey that only 5 percent of the state's bar workers are protected from secondhand smoke on the job,” said Schillo. “This pub study is significant because it is the largest of its kind and it reminds us that comprehensive smoke-free ordinances are the only way to significantly improve indoor air quality.”

Twelve states, Washington, D.C. and Puerto Rico have enacted smoke-free workplace laws that include restaurants and bars, including California, Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Massachusetts, Montana, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Utah, Vermont and Washington (the Montana and Utah laws extend to bars in 2009, while the D.C. law does so on Jan. 2, 2007). Two other states – Florida and Idaho – have smoke-free laws that exempt only stand-alone bars. Hundreds of communities throughout the U.S. have also implemented laws, as have entire countries including Ireland, England (effective 2007), Norway, New Zealand, Sweden, Italy and Uruguay.

The U.S. cities tested with smoke-free pubs include: Hartford, CT; Bloomington, IN; Bethesda, MD; Boston, MA; Buffalo and New York City, NY; Providence, RI; Austin, TX; and Appleton, WI.

In addition to St. Paul, the U.S. cities tested with pubs that allowed smoking at the time of the study include: Phoenix, AZ; Denver, CO; Atlanta, GA; Chicago, IL; Indianapolis, IN; Louisville, KY; Baltimore, MD; Manchester, NH; Hoboken, NJ; Santa Fe, NM; Raleigh/Durham/Chapel Hill, NC; Lakewood, OH; Philadelphia, PA; Charleston, SC; Galveston and Houston, TX; Arlington, VA; and Washington, D.C.

The full report can be found at www.hsph.harvard.edu.

MPAAT is an independent, non-profit organization that improves the health of Minnesotans by reducing the harm caused by tobacco. MPAAT serves Minnesota through its grant-making program, QUITPLANSM stop-smoking services and statewide outreach activities. It is funded with three percent of the state's 1998 tobacco settlement.