



**For Immediate Release:**

December 27, 2007

## **LA County Youth Now Protected From Secondhand Smoke in Cars** New State Law Prohibits Smoking in Vehicles with Youth Under 18

LOS ANGELES – On January 1, 2008 California’s new “Smoke-free Cars with Minors” law will take effect prohibiting smoking of cigarettes, cigars or pipes in vehicles with youth under 18 years of age. The law is intended to protect children in response to growing scientific evidence that smoking in cars exposes passengers to dangerously high levels of secondhand smoke.

“For the past two decades, Los Angeles County residents and visitors have benefited from public health laws that protect our communities from tobacco and secondhand smoke,” said Jonathan E. Fielding, MD, MPH, Director of Public Health and Health Officer. “This new law limiting our youth’s exposure to secondhand smoke, specifically in vehicles, is an important and logical extension of that protection.”

According to the 2006 Surgeon General’s Report, there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke. A recent study published by a team of environmental scientists from Stanford University showed that the level of toxic air caused by smoking in a vehicle can be up to 10 times greater than the level which the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) considers hazardous.

“I urge everyone to support this important and necessary public health law. Do not smoke with minors in your vehicle. Do your part to protect our youth from unnecessary health conditions, such as asthma, and the risk for more serious and life-threatening illnesses,” said Fielding.

Evidence shows that children are especially vulnerable to the health effects caused by breathing secondhand smoke in confined spaces, such as in a vehicle. Secondhand smoke is a known cause for bronchitis, asthma, pneumonia and ear infections in children. The harmful chemicals in secondhand smoke can remain in the air in a vehicle for many hours and even days after a cigarette, cigar or pipe has been smoked. These chemicals also stick to surfaces, such as a child’s car seat, making it a potential source of danger to children.

SB 7 goes into effect on the first day of 2008, prohibiting smoking of cigarettes, pipes or cigars in any motor vehicle, regardless of whether the vehicle is stationary or moving, in which a minor is present. A violation is punishable by a fine of up to \$100.00 and categorized as a secondary offense.

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# Public Health News

For more information, visit our website at [www.lapublichealth.org/tob](http://www.lapublichealth.org/tob), or visit the California Clean Air Project at [www.ccap.etr.org](http://www.ccap.etr.org).

For information on quitting smoking, please visit [www.lapublichealth.org/tob](http://www.lapublichealth.org/tob), or call the California Smoker's Helpline at (800) NO-BUTTS (English) or (800) 45-NO-FUME (Spanish).

The Department of Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of the nearly 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control, and community and family health. Public Health comprises more than 4,000 employees and an annual budget exceeding \$750 million. To learn more about Public Health and the work we do, please visit <http://www.lapublichealth.org>.

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## **SB 7: “Smoke-Free Cars with Minors” Fact Sheet**

**Law Summary:**

Effective January 1, 2008, H&S Code §118947 bans the smoking of any cigarette, pipe or cigar in any moving or parked vehicle while a youth younger than the age of 18 is present. Smokers can be fined up to \$100.00 for smoking in vehicles when minors are present. Law enforcement officers, including the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department, the Los Angeles Police Department, and city police departments will be responsible for enforcing the law. Violations are categorized as secondary offences, meaning law enforcement officials may not stop a vehicle for a smoking violation alone, but may include the infraction with other citations.

**Purpose of the Law:**

As a result of this law, children in cars will breathe less secondhand smoke. It may also help reduce cigarette litter on streets and highways, reduce roadside fires, and help smokers to quit.

Children are especially at risk to the harmful health effects caused by breathing secondhand smoke in confined spaces, such as a car or truck. Secondhand smoke is a known cause for bronchitis, asthma, pneumonia and ear infections in children.

The level of toxic air in a vehicle when someone is smoking is up to ten times greater than the level which the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) considers hazardous. Harmful chemicals in secondhand smoke can remain in the air and on surfaces in a car or truck for many hours, and even days, after a cigarette has been smoked.

**Facts about Secondhand Smoke:**

In the 2005 California Tobacco Survey, 92.3% of California adults agreed that smoking should not be allowed inside cars when children are in them.

Secondhand smoke is classified by the EPA as a Group A carcinogen; this group also includes arsenic and asbestos.

The California Air Resources Board (CARB) identified secondhand smoke as a toxic air contaminant in January 2006.

The 2006 Surgeon General’s Report states that secondhand smoke causes disease in children. Children exposed to secondhand smoke are at an increased risk for acute respiratory infections, ear problems, and developing asthma. The Report also states that scientific evidence about the dangers of secondhand smoke is indisputable: there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke.

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