



CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

# NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH HAZARD ASSESSMENT

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## California Adds Environmental Tobacco Smoke to List of Chemicals That Cause Reproductive Harm

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**CONTACT: Allan Hirsch**

**(916) 324-0955**

**[www.oehha.ca.gov](http://www.oehha.ca.gov)**

SACRAMENTO – An independent scientific panel today approved the addition of Environmental Tobacco Smoke (ETS) to the Proposition 65 list of chemicals known to the State of California to cause birth defects or other reproductive harm.

The state's Developmental and Reproductive Toxicant (DART) Identification Committee, a panel of independent scientists administered by the California Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA), concluded that scientific research on ETS, known more commonly as secondhand smoke, clearly shows the chemical can harm the development of the fetus.

"The public has long associated secondhand smoke with cancer, and more recently with respiratory ailments in children. Expectant parents should also associate secondhand smoke with premature births and low birthweights," said OEHHA Director Dr. Joan E. Denton.

The DART Committee's evaluation of ETS was performed in accordance with Proposition 65, which California voters approved in 1986. Proposition 65 requires the state to publish and periodically update a list of chemicals that are known to the state to cause cancer, birth defects or other reproductive harm. Businesses that knowingly cause significant exposures to listed chemicals must provide warnings. Proposition 65 warnings are common throughout California. OEHHA is the lead agency for implementation of Proposition 65.

The committee consists of scientists with expertise in disciplines such as toxicology, epidemiology and medicine. These scientists are appointed to the committee by the Governor.

The listing of ETS as causing reproductive harm will not place any new warning requirements on tobacco products. Tobacco smoke has been listed as a carcinogen under Proposition 65 since 1988, and the warnings on tobacco products required by the federal government satisfy Proposition 65 requirements. However, the listing of ETS as causing reproductive harm is important because it

documents the serious effects that secondhand smoke exposure can have on the developing fetus, Dr. Denton said.

“Secondhand smoke does not belong around pregnant women. Just as family members should not smoke around children, they should also refrain from smoking around pregnant women, particularly at home and in the car,” Dr. Denton said.

The committee’s decision to list ETS was based primarily on a comprehensive evaluation of scientific research on ETS that OEHHA completed in 2005. The evaluation found adequate documentation to show that ETS exposure during pregnancy can cause low birth weights and pre-term deliveries.

The OEHHA evaluation was also used as part of the basis for the Air Resources Board’s identification of ETS as a Toxic Air Contaminant in January 2006, and for OEHHA’s designation in February 2006 of ETS as a toxic air contaminant that may cause infants and children to be especially susceptible to illness. ETS health effects on infants and children that were documented in the evaluation include Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, asthma, bronchitis and other respiratory-tract infections, chronic respiratory symptoms such as cough and wheezing, and middle-ear infections.

The evaluation and other ETS documentation, including a pamphlet on secondhand smoke and children’s health, are available at OEHHA’s Web site at [http://www.oehha.ca.gov/air/environmental\\_tobacco/index.html](http://www.oehha.ca.gov/air/environmental_tobacco/index.html).

*The Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment is one of six entities within the California Environmental Protection Agency. OEHHA’s mission is to protect and enhance public health and the environment by objective scientific evaluation of risks posed by hazardous substances.*

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