

NO SAFE BETS FOR CASINO WORKERS: NIOSH study shows casino workers face toxic conditions

Berkeley, CA – A new report from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) shows workers in Las Vegas casinos are exposed to dangerous levels of secondhand smoke at work. NIOSH recommends making casinos 100% smokefree to ensure indoor air within casinos is safe for workers to breathe.

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 124 card dealers in Bally's, Caesars Palace, and Paris casinos on the Las Vegas strip.

Researchers found secondhand smoke components in the air including nicotine, 4-vinyl pyridine, solanesol, benzene, toluene, p-dichloromethane, and formaldehyde. In addition, urinary testing of workers after their shifts indicated cancer causing toxins in secondhand smoke were absorbed into workers' bodies. The NIOSH report authors concluded that the "best means of eliminating workplace exposure to [secondhand smoke] is to ban all smoking in the casinos."

Teresa Price, a casino worker who filed the original complaint with NIOSH in 2005, was relieved the report was finally released. "We knew we were being exposed to dangerous levels of secondhand smoke, so we filed the request with NIOSH. We just didn't know how worried we should be. Now we know and I'm horrified," said Ms. Price. "We were working day in and day out, breathing in toxins all day and night without knowing the extent of the danger. No one should have to work like that," added Price.

Ms. Price is not alone. The results from the NIOSH report are sending a shockwave through the casino industry, with workers growing more concerned about their health. The NIOSH Report findings are posted for workers to review in the three casinos where tests were conducted.

Cynthia Hallett, Executive Director of Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights, said, "Casino workers deserve the same rights as other workers, including the right to a healthy safe workplace, free from toxic secondhand smoke. After the release of this report, we hope to see casino workers protected by strong smokefree workplace laws throughout the country."

Nevada's current smokefree workplace law does not cover the gaming areas of casinos. In fact, Nevada legislators are now considering rolling back the state's smokefree workplace law even further. Hallett added "If anything, these results should convince Nevada lawmakers to strengthen their state law to include the gaming floors of casinos, not roll it back to expose more workers to toxic secondhand smoke."

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

Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights is a national, member-based, not-for-profit organization based in Berkeley, CA that is dedicated to helping nonsmokers breathe smokefree air in enclosed public places and workplaces.