

Safety BULLETIN

EPA BACKS SMOKE-FREE ENVIRONMENT ACT

The Environmental Protection Agency recently released a congressionally-requested report which estimates that passage of the Smoke-Free Environment Act of 1993 will achieve up to \$72 billion in net benefits from smoke-free buildings. The bill, which was introduced by Representative Henry Waxman of California in August 1993, is currently awaiting consideration in the House Energy and Commerce Committee.

The bill would ban or restrict smoking in most indoor environments used by the public, such as restaurants, schools, and hospitals. It would require all owners of non-residential buildings regularly entered by 10 or more persons in one week to ban smoking inside the building. Or, if smoking is permitted on the premises, it would be restricted to separately ventilated rooms that vent tobacco smoke directly to the outside air. Violators could be fined up to \$5,000. Many of the provisions in the Waxman bill are comparable to the environmental tobacco smoke regulations proposed by OSHA in April of this year. EPA's report contains a quantitative analysis of the compliance costs, health, and economic benefits of the legislation. It looks at the benefits of reduced exposure to secondhand smoke and the reduced operating and maintenance expense in smoke-free buildings. The study also outlines additional benefits achieved from such items as reduced employee absenteeism and fewer smoking-related fires.

The analysis estimates that:

- * Annual costs for implementing smoke-free policies in the U.S. would range from \$0.1 - \$0.4 billion;
- * Cost of constructing smoking lounges would range from \$0.3 - \$0.7 billion;
- * Enforcement of the Act would range from \$0.1 - \$0.4 billion.

The annual benefits from reduced exposure to secondhand smoke include:

- * Savings from premature deaths avoided and reduced illness in children would be \$35 - \$66 billion;
- * Reduced operation and maintenance costs of buildings would be \$4 - \$8 billion;
- * Savings from reduction in smoke-related fires in public buildings would be \$0.5 - \$0.7 billion; and
- * Reduction in annual expenditures for medical services would be \$2.3 - \$4.7 billion

Copies of the report, The Costs and Benefits of Smoking Restrictions: An Assessment of the Smoke-Free Environment Act of 1993 (H.R. 3434), are available from the EPA Indoor Air Quality Information Clearinghouse, P. O. Box 37133, Washington, DC 20013-7133, (800) 438-4318.