

Secondhand smoke a toxic in California

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The Air Resources Board in California has designated secondhand tobacco smoke as a toxic air contaminant -- making California the first state to do so.

Board members said the measure, which could lead to new city and state laws as well as educational campaigns directed at smoking parents, was based on studies linking other people's smoke to increased cases of breast cancer, heart disease, asthma and reproductive problems among nonsmokers, the San Francisco Chronicle reported Friday.

The designation, approved 6-0 by the Air Resources Board and recommended by the state's Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, places secondhand smoke in the same category as arsenic and benzene.

California smokers emit 40 tons of nicotine, 365 tons of small particles of pollution and 1,900 tons of carbon monoxide each year, according to the American Lung Association.

State scientists will investigate and report on the state's smokiest locales such outside buildings, parks, beaches and public events.

California prohibits smoking in workplaces, restaurants and bars, but some complain of having to walk through a cloud of smoke outside public buildings.

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