



Study: Taverns not only workplace that allows smoking

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While the debate on a proposed smoke-free workplace bill in Wisconsin has focused almost entirely on taverns, a study indicates they account for only one-fifth of the workplaces where smoking is allowed.

The study, released Monday by the University of Wisconsin's Paul P. Carbone Comprehensive Cancer Center, estimates more than 80 percent of the employees exposed to secondhand smoke work in manufacturing, retail and wholesale businesses and transportation.

"While tavern and restaurant employees would benefit from a smoke-free workplace law, most of the changes would benefit those working in other industries," said Dr. Patrick Remington, the center's associate director.

More than 660,000 Wisconsin workers — one in five — are in sites that still allow smoking, the report stated.

"The study changes your perspective a little, but it doesn't surprise me," Paula Silha, coordinator of the La Crosse Area Health Initiative. "I work a lot with small employers trying to adopt smoke-free workplaces."

Silha said she has had patients after heart surgery concerned about going back to work where only tables separate smoking and nonsmoking areas in lunch rooms.

The number of adults exposed to smoke in workplaces declined from 33 percent in 2000 to 22 percent in 2007, but the report contends many workers still face unhealthy condition of employment in some industries.

"These employees may be exposed to dangerous levels of tobacco smoke for up to eight hours per day," Remington said.

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