

Kentucky, W. Virginia lead smoking deaths

Wisconsin sees 16% drop in CDC study

Associated Press,
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Atlanta — Kentucky and West Virginia, where people traditionally smoke the most, have the highest death rates from smoking, a new federal study has found.

Rounding out the 10 states with the highest average annual smoking death rates were Nevada, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Arkansas, Alabama, Indiana and Missouri.

The lowest death rates were in Utah and Hawaii, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study released this week.

The smoking death rate in Kentucky was about 371 deaths out of every 100,000 adults age 35 and older. That was nearly one-and-a-half times higher than the national median of 263 per 100,000. And it was nearly three times the rate for Utah, which was 138 per 100,000.

The smoking death rate in Wisconsin was about 244 deaths per 100,000 between 2000 and 2004. That represented a 16% drop from the previous period, 1996 to 1999.

The smoking death rates were calculated using death certificate data from 2000 to 2004, focusing on lung can-

NOT HIRING SMOKERS

The practice of barring smokers from employment is becoming more common, but it is unfair and may have unintended consequences that do more harm than good, researchers said in an essay published Wednesday in the journal *Tobacco Control*.

Policies prohibiting the hiring of smokers have gained popularity in the past year, a co-author of the report, Michael Siegel, said Wednesday. One U.S. company, for example, has stopped hiring smokers, has made smoking outside the workplace grounds for firing and has extended its **smoking ban** to employees' spouses.

Siegel, a professor at Boston University School of Public Health and a tobacco-control advocate, and co-author Brian Houle of the University of Washington fear that a widespread adoption of such policies might make smokers nearly unemployable, cause them to lose their health insurance and affect their health and that of their families.

Moreover, they say, refusing to hire smokers is discriminatory and might lead to the adoption of other selective employment practices, such as not hiring people who are overweight or who have high cholesterol levels.

Source: Los Angeles Times

On the Web

CDC publication:
www.cdc.gov/mmwr

cer and 18 other diseases caused by **cigarette** smoking.

The rates track closely with the adult smoking rates in each state. Kentucky and West Virginia had the highest smoking rates in 2004 as well.

But obesity and other problems that trigger heart disease are also factors. Smoking, added to those problems, "is like gasoline on the fire," said Terry Pechacek, a CDC senior scientist for tobacco-related issues.

For every state, the annual number of smoking deaths was higher among men than women. However, rates declined among men in 49 states since the late 1990s but declined among women in only 32 states.

Wisconsin men had a smoking death rate more than double the rate for the state's women.

The data were published in this week's CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report.

Mark Johnson of the Journal Sentinel staff contributed to this report from Milwaukee.

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