



NEWS RELEASE

Immediate Release

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Actuaries: Cost of Nonsmokers' Exposure to Secondhand Smoke Nearly \$6 Billion a Year

WASHINGTON – 3 Oct. 2006 – The effects of secondhand smoke on nonsmokers in the United States cost nearly \$6 billion in medical and economic costs in 2004 according to an actuarial study.

Subsequent to a recent report by the Surgeon General that confirmed secondhand smoke causes lung cancer and heart disease, **Cori Uccello**, senior health fellow of the **American Academy of Actuaries**, analyzed the implications of a study¹ that estimated costs related to diseases caused by secondhand smoke.

“Medical costs to care for nonsmokers suffering from coronary heart disease and lung cancer as a result of secondhand-smoke exposure is estimated to have reached \$2.6 billion in 2004,” Uccello said. “This includes the medical care of nearly half a million people suffering from coronary heart disease, and an estimated 2,500 patients newly diagnosed with lung cancer— an extremely deadly form of cancer— as a result of exposure to secondhand smoke.”

In addition, economic losses due to lost wages and benefits from disability or premature death of nonsmokers caused by exposure to secondhand smoke are estimated at \$3.2 billion for 2004, giving a low-bound cost total of nearly \$6 billion.

“It is important for policymakers, who must contemplate public smoking restrictions, to understand both how many people suffer ailments due to secondhand smoke as well as the costs involved,” Uccello said.

Uccello said actual costs could be even higher, because they do not include costs from other diseases and conditions that the Surgeon General identifies as being caused by secondhand smoke, such as low birth weight and sudden infant death syndrome. In addition, the Surgeon General finds evidence to suggest, but not prove, that secondhand smoke causes other conditions, such as asthma and an increased risk for chronic pulmonary disease.

(more)

To schedule an interview with Cori Uccello, contact Andrew Simonelli, media relations manager for the American Academy of Actuaries, at 202.785.7872. To view the Academy fact sheet, “Costs Associated With Secondhand Smoke,” visit: www.actuary.org.

¹ Donald F. Behan, Michael P. Eriksen, and Yijia Lin. 2005. “Economic effects of Environmental Tobacco Smoke.” Schaumburg, IL: Society of Actuaries.

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The American Academy of Actuaries is the public information organization for the U.S. actuarial profession. Academy committees, task forces and work groups regularly prepare testimony and provide information to Congress and senior federal policy-makers, comment on proposed federal and state regulations, and work closely with the National Association of Insurance Commissioners and state officials on issues related to insurance, pensions and other forms of risk financing.