

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: August 1, 2006

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Vermont Department of Health Warns Against Exposure to Secondhand Smoke

Statewide Campaign Addresses Surgeon General's Report on Involuntary Contact With Cigarette Smoke

Burlington – The Vermont Department of Health is launching its annual “Smoke-Free Zone” campaign, urging all parents and caregivers to keep children far away from secondhand smoke, and all nonsmokers to protect themselves against the harmful effects of tobacco smoke.

The dangers of tobacco smoke are even more widespread than previously thought. The Surgeon General's latest report released on June 27, *The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke*, confirms that secondhand smoke causes severe illness in children as well as cancer and heart disease even in people who've never smoked.

“There is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke, which contains at least 250 chemicals known to be toxic or cancer causing,” said Sharon Moffatt, RN, MSN, Acting Commissioner of the Vermont Department of Health. “Breathing secondhand smoke for even a short time can have immediate harmful effects on the heart and lungs, which can increase the risk of a heart attack.”

Approximately 60 percent of children in the U.S. ages 3-11 are regularly exposed to secondhand smoke. In children, secondhand smoke causes an increased risk for sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), acute respiratory infections such as bronchitis and pneumonia, severe ear infections and chronic asthma.

“No matter where you are – even when in a car or outside – it's important to keep a smoke-free zone around your loved ones, especially those with chronic illnesses,” said Sheri Lynn, Tobacco Control Program Chief at the Vermont Department of Health. “The best way for smokers to protect their own health and the health of their families is to quit. Until you quit, think of your loved ones as smoke-free zones.”

To raise awareness of the impacts of secondhand smoke and further emphasize the importance of creating smoke-free zones, the Vermont Department of Health is working with community coalitions statewide to distribute bibs, stickers and decals. The bibs read “Smoke-Free Zone: Little Lungs at Work” and are designed to remind parents and caregivers of the real dangers of secondhand smoke. The Department of Health is encouraging Vermonters to post the “Smoke-Free Zone” stickers and decals in their vehicles to ensure that their cars are recognized as smoke-free zones.

Nonsmokers can protect themselves and their loved ones from secondhand smoke by:

- Maintaining a smoke-free home and car at all times.
- Requesting that people not smoke around you and your loved ones, even in public settings.
- Making sure your childcare center is smoke-free.
- Teaching your children to stay away from cigarettes and secondhand smoke.
- Requesting a summary of the Surgeon General's Report by e-mailing tobaccovt@vdh.state.vt.us.

More and more Vermonters are banning smoking in the home and the car – based on the 2005 Adult Tobacco Survey, 82 percent of all Vermonters with children banned smoking in their homes and 88 percent banned smoking in their cars.

Vermonters who are interested in quitting can call the Vermont Quit Line toll-free at 1-877-YES-QUIT (877-937-7848) or contact the “Ready, Set...STOP” program at their local hospital. Online quit-smoking services are now available free to Vermonters at www.VermontQuitNet.com. For inspiration to quit and tips from other Vermonters, see www.tobaccostories.org.