

Secondhand smoke costs billions

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Medical and economic costs associated with secondhand smoke's effect on non-smokers in the United States could be \$6 billion, a recent study shows.

The American Academy of Actuaries in Washington released its study after the U.S. Surgeon General's 2006 report that secondhand smoke causes lung cancer and heart diseases, the Insurance Networking News said. The actuarial study, "Economic Effects of Tobacco Smoke," used 2004 data to analyze financial implications related to diseases caused by secondhand smoke.

The study said medical costs for coronary heart disease and lung cancer in non-smokers that result from exposure is estimated to have reached \$2.6 billion in 2004. Using U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis information, economic losses from lost wages, disability and premature deaths of non-smokers exposed to secondhand smoke were pinned at about \$3.2 billion.

The study said true costs could be higher because analysts didn't include costs from other diseases and conditions the Surgeon General said were caused by secondhand smoke, including low birth weight and sudden infant death syndrome.

Roughly 50,000 people die annually from illnesses traced to secondhand smoke exposure, Insurance Networking News said.

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