



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Smokefree Outdoor Dining in the City of San Diego

What is Tobacco Smoke Residue?

Many people are familiar with the health harms of secondhand smoke, and a large body of evidence shows that there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke.⁹ A growing body of evidence shows that the residue left behind on clothes, skin, furniture, walls, and other surfaces long after someone smokes,^{3,7,12} called tobacco smoke residue, can also cause health problems. People can be exposed by absorbing it through their skin, consuming contaminated objects or dust, and breathing polluted air.^{11,15}

Also called “**thirdhand smoke**” or “stale tobacco smoke”, the residue is toxic to humans, especially children. Tobacco smoke residue contains more than 25 chemicals listed in California’s Proposition 65.^{8,14} Exposure in healthy human volunteers has been shown to damage human cells and increase respiratory illnesses in children.^{5,10,13} In laboratory studies, tobacco smoke residue is associated with slow wound healing, increased “bad” cholesterol, impaired liver function, and lung inflammation.^{1,2,4,6,16}

Outdoor Dining Policy in San Diego



15 of 19 jurisdictions in San Diego County have passed comprehensive smokefree outdoor dining.



San Diego is the largest city in the county without a comprehensive smokefree outdoor dining policy. Some restaurant patios are voluntarily smokefree; others are required to be as part of the Spaces as Places program.

Evidence for Policymakers to Consider

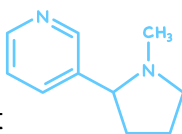
Tobacco Smoke Residue Exposure



In 2023, thirdhand smoke levels were compared between restaurants with a community reputation of allowing smoking on the patio and those with confirmed smokefree patios.

Results showed that a table tested in each of the restaurant patios with observed smoking had **14x higher levels of nicotine** on average. Volunteers who ate a meal in a confirmed smoking patio had **13x higher levels** of nicotine on their hands afterward.

In 2024, levels were compared between restaurants that agreed to allow smoking and vaping over the phone and those that did not. Tobacco smoke residue was detected on patio tables at levels of concern* in 40% of restaurants that banned and **60% of restaurants that allowed smoking**.



*“Levels of concern” refers to detectable levels of nicotine above background levels expected to be found in a non-smoking environment.

Patron & Industry Opinions

73%

of San Diegans surveyed would not eat a meal in an outdoor dining area if people in that area were smoking.

78%

of San Diegans surveyed would support a policy that bans smoking in all outdoor dining areas in the City, including a majority of those who currently use tobacco.

88%

of San Diego restaurant professionals surveyed personally prefer eating in smokefree outdoor dining areas.

100%

of 8 San Diego restaurant professionals surveyed feel a smokefree policy would not have a negative impact on restaurants, in general.

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