

Lives saved by Smoke-Free Workplace Law

Study shows 577 fewer heart attack deaths each year in Massachusetts

A study conducted by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the Harvard School of Public Health shows that there were 577 fewer than expected heart attack deaths annually after the Massachusetts Smoke-Free Workplace Law was implemented in 2004.

Data on heart attack deaths during the period of 1999 to 2006 for all 351 cities and towns in the Commonwealth was evaluated. The study grouped towns into three categories:

- municipalities that passed strong local laws before the statewide law was enacted in July 2004
- those that had weaker secondhand smoke laws prior to 2004
- and those with no laws prior to 2004.

The rate of decrease in heart attack deaths varied depending on whether a municipality had implemented a local smoke-free workplace law prior to the implementation of the state law, or went smoke-free when the state law was implemented in 2004.

In municipalities with either weak laws or no laws prior to the state law, the decrease in deaths before the state law was relatively slow. However, these same municipalities saw a sharper decrease after implementation. Municipalities with pre-existing strong laws saw much of their decrease in heart attack deaths after implementation of the strong local law and prior to the state's Workplace Law being implemented in 2004.

When municipalities with pre-existing strong laws were compared to municipalities with either weak laws or no law, researchers found that, though heart attack deaths did decline overall, a strong smoke-free workplace law was the single factor that indicated a sharp decline in deaths.

By the end of 2006, there was virtually no difference in heart attack death rates across Massachusetts communities.

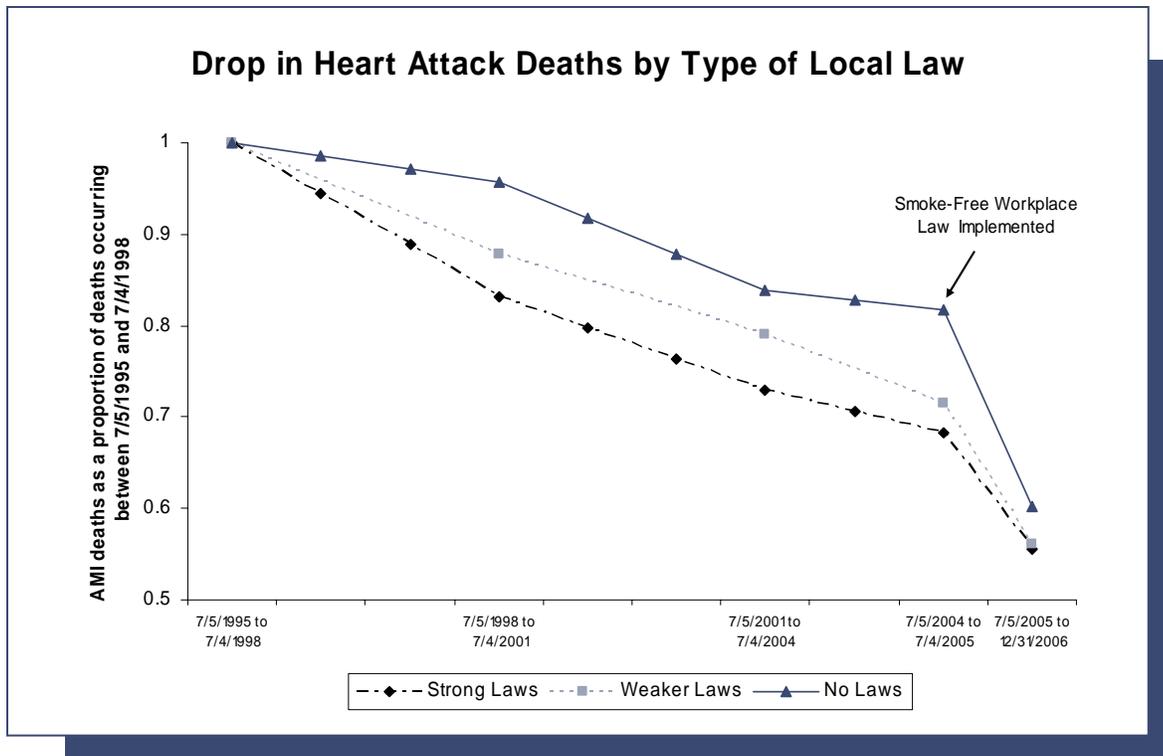
The study concludes that it is likely that reduced exposure to secondhand smoke had a significant effect in reducing heart attack deaths.

The Department will release the full report early in 2009, with estimates of local impact and cost savings to the Massachusetts health care system.



Massachusetts Department of Public Health
Tobacco Control Program
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Make smoking history.



History of the Massachusetts Smoke-Free Workplace Law

By the end of 2001, only nine Massachusetts communities had enacted comprehensive local laws.

Beginning in 2002, the Boston Public Health Commission and Cambridge Public Health Department, in conjunction with other local leaders, formed the Clean Air Works Coalition to promote a regional approach to enacting smoke-free laws. The Massachusetts Tobacco Control Program offered technical assistance to Massachusetts municipalities to draft new smoke-free regulations or ordinances. In 2003, the Boston Public Health Commission enacted a comprehensive smoke-free workplace law. Cambridge and Somerville passed similar laws later that year.

Due to the success of the Coalition, a regional approach was adopted by other communities across the state, resulting in 45 communities implementing comprehensive laws between 2002 and 2004, bringing the total number of communities with strong laws to 54. An additional 98 communities implemented weaker laws that covered some types of workplaces.

A groundswell of local and legislative support led to the passage of the Massachusetts Smoke-Free Workplace Law, implemented on July 5, 2004.