

For Immediate Release: May 4, 2010

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Tobacco's toll on Iowa County: 33 deaths

A new state health report released earlier this month shows smoking-related disease killed (33 people) in Iowa County last year – both through smoking and secondhand smoke exposure.

The new 2010 *Burden of Tobacco* report concludes that over 7,000 people – or 20 people each day -- die in Wisconsin from smoking-related disease and that tobacco continues to be the single greatest cause of preventable deaths in Wisconsin.

“This report shows us clearly in Iowa County that tobacco is a major health threat,” said June Meudt of the Iowa County Health Department and the Southwest Alliance for Tobacco Prevention . “What is sad about it – and encouraging at the same time – is that these deaths are completely preventable.”

“It is sad that we still see such devastating widespread disease despite how much we know about tobacco's health threat. But it is encouraging that there is something we can do about it – and that we're making progress,” Meudt said.

A quarter of Wisconsin adults smoked a decade ago. But since the formation of the Wisconsin Tobacco Prevention and Control Program in 2000, that rate has dropped to just under a fifth of adults. Smoking among middle school youth has also dropped from 12.2% in 2000 to 4.3% in 2008, according to the 2008 *Youth Tobacco Survey*.

Tobacco also exacts a heavy economic toll on the state. The report estimates that smoking costs Wisconsin \$4.5 billion per year, including \$2.8 billion in health care costs and \$1.7 billion in lost productivity.

Health advocates are optimistic that the state's smoke-free workplace law will lower smoking rates and save lives. “This law will improve the health of all Wisconsinites,” said Meudt.

The report can be accessed on line at: <http://www.medsch.wisc.edu/mep/>

The Burden of Tobacco in Wisconsin is a collaboration of the Wisconsin Department of Health Services-Tobacco Prevention and Control Program, University of Wisconsin Carbone Cancer Center, and the American Cancer Society. For more information on the report please contact Dr. Karen Palmersheim at (608) 262-2825.