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Coalition trying to ban smoking in Treasure Valley bars isn't giving up on its mission
Air in smoky taverns is 36 times more polluted than air outside, Smokefree Idaho says.

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A new study of air pollution inside Boise, Meridian and Garden City bars is the latest chapter in Smokefree Idaho's 18-month-long campaign to protect workers and patrons.

So far, the campaign has not succeeded in getting any Treasure Valley cities to ban smoking. Eagle came close but ultimately backed off. But the campaign leaders say they will not stop trying.

"As long as there are workers that are not protected, we are continuing on," said Heidi Low, Idaho director of government relations for the American Cancer Society's Cancer Action Network.

The project is the first scientifically based study of its kind to measure the impact of smoking on the indoor air quality in Treasure Valley work places, according to the group.

Volunteers conducted the study under the supervision of the Roswell Park Cancer Institute in Buffalo, N.Y., known for its studies of indoor air quality.

Monitors measured levels of fine particle air pollution. Secondhand smoke is a major source of fine particulate pollution, according to the Coalition for a Healthy Idaho, running the Smokefree Idaho campaign.

The coalition is made up of 30 health-related groups, including Blue Cross of Idaho, the Idaho Academy of Family Physicians and the Boise State University Center for Health Policy.

The study found that full-time bar workers are exposed to more than four times the average annual limits of fine particulate air pollution recommended by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

At least 24 states and more than 350 cities have comprehensive bans on smoking at workplaces, restaurants and bars, Low said.

The coalition is trying to plug remaining holes in Idaho's state anti-smoking law, which bars smoking in restaurants and most workplaces, but not bars. The line between a bar and a restaurant is a gray area in state law, Low said.

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