



# smoke alarm

Smoking in public can seriously jeopardize the health of smokers and non-smokers alike

BY DR. ART HISTER



call their “smokers’ rights” (huh?), since smokers are only harming themselves by smoking. So, why doesn’t the world butt out of their business and let them continue to commit slow suicide (smokers generally don’t put it like this, but let’s call it what it really is) by continuing to smoke wherever they want to smoke?

In fact, when smokers say they’re only harming themselves, they are (pardon the pun) dead wrong because

concluded that following the adoption of smoking restrictions, heart attack rates in the population at large will plummet nearly instantly — within three months, in fact — and they keep falling the longer those restrictions are in place.

According to this data, heart attack rates are 17 per cent lower at one year after public smoking restrictions are implemented, 25 per cent lower at two years, and a whopping 36 per cent lower at three years.

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smoking also kills all those around the smoker. The reality is that the more we restrict the right to smoke in public places (including soon, I hope, parks and open spaces like common patios), the better off we will all be. Not to mention that if we do pass such open-space restrictions, we will also be flooded with far fewer butts littering parks, beaches and even backcountry trails. Why do so many smokers, I often wonder, consider the world to be their ashtray?

To give you an idea of just how much we can all gain when smoking restrictions are implemented, two excellent recent studies

And these conclusions aren’t just blowing smoke, because in one western American city where public smoking bans were passed, the heart attack rate soon fell by 40 per cent. But when a judge subsequently overturned that ban, the heart attack rate shot right back up to the level it had been before the smoking restrictions were passed.

I know it’s dreadfully hard to quit smoking, but it should still be against the law to light up any time there’s a non-smoker around. Period. ■

**A**s a world-class whiner myself (that opinion, by the way, is courtesy of my wife), I have to say that no one seems to whine more these days than smokers. Nearly all of them lament often and loudly that the world has become *so* unfair to them, since more and more of the world has begun to restrict the locations

where smokers can light up. Amazingly, even such previous smokers’ paradises as Greece, Scotland, France and Italy now limit smoking in some public places.

What’s really galling about such restrictions, smokers will tell everyone whom they can buttonhole — especially radio talk-show hosts — is that restricting the right to smoke steps on what they invariably

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