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Lan Tran CHHS 400B/496B Senior Capstone/Field Seminar

Spring 2007

Implementing Voluntary Smoke-Free Entryways at Agricultural Companies in Salinas: Employers' Attitudes and Responses

Senior Capstone Project

Keywords: Smoke-free entryways, smoke-free workplaces, agricultural companies, Salinas, Monterey County

Abstract: This project aims for the implementation of the voluntary smoke-free entryways program at agricultural companies in Salinas, Monterey County. A second goal is to achieve a better understanding of the agricultural employers' attitudes toward smoke-free workplace policies. The project included an intervention, a follow-up survey, the creation of a database of survey responses, and an analysis of survey data. One-quarter of companies accepted our request to implement the smoke-free entryways policy. Companies gave various reasons for accepting or declining to participate in the program. Survey responses and existing research suggested that agricultural employers were less interested relative to those in the service sector apparently because more of their employees smoke. The size of the company was found to have no relationship to its owner's attitude toward this issue.

Executive Summary

Secondhand smoke contains toxic chemicals that cause thousands of nonsmokers to die from lung cancer and coronary heart disease every year in the United States.

During the past decade, more and more actions have been taken in this country to prevent people from being harmed by secondhand smoke. Numerous local governments, employers, and businesses have implemented voluntary smoke-free workplace policies.

This project is sponsored by the Monterey County Health Department, California. It aims for the implementation of the voluntary smoke-free entryways program at agricultural companies in Salinas, Monterey County. A second goal is to achieve a better understanding of agricultural employers' attitudes toward smoke-free workplace policies. This information may be helpful for health administrators to devise programs that specifically target this sector.

The project included an intervention, a follow-up survey, the creation of a database of survey responses, and an analysis of survey data. One-quarter of companies accepted our request to implement the smoke-free entryways policy, more than 40% declined to participate, and one-third could not commit at this time. Companies gave various reasons for accepting or declining to participate in the program. Survey responses and existing research suggested that employers' attitudes toward smoke-free workplaces varied among sectors. The size of the company was found to have no relationship to its owner's attitude toward this issue. At the same time, it is possible that agricultural employers were less interested in this issue relative to those in the service sector because there were more smokers among their employees.

Background on Monterey County Health Department

The project was sponsored by the Monterey County Health Department,

California. The mission of the Monterey County Health Department is to enhance,

promote, and protect the health of Monterey County's individuals, families, communities,
and environment.

The department provides a wide variety of health-related services to county residents. There are seven divisions in the health department besides the administrative division. These include Animal Services, Behavioral Health, Clinic Services, Community Health, Emergency Medical Services, Environmental Health, Public Guardian, and Conservator. These divisions are staffed by medical professionals such as medical doctors, public health specialists, and nurses. The department is a public agency and is funded by many sources such as federal, state, county, cities and private money (Monterey County Health Department, 2007). I worked in the office of the Health Officer Division under the supervision of Dr. Krista Hanni, an epidemiologist.

Description of the problem

The danger of secondhand smoke is indisputable. The Environmental Protection Agency classifies secondhand smoke as a Class A carcinogen which is known to cause cancer in human (Center for Tobacco Policy & Organizing, n.d.). Secondhand smoke contains more than 4,000 chemicals that cause 3,000 nonsmokers to die from lung cancer and about 62,000 nonsmokers to die from coronary heart disease every year in the United States (U.S., 2006).

During the past decade, more and more actions have been taken in the United States to prevent people from being harmed by secondhand smoke. According to the

Center for Disease Control and Prevention, as of June 1, 2006, 14 states have laws in effect that make private workplaces smoke-free. In addition, numerous employers and businesses have implemented voluntary smoke-free workplace policies. California is one of the first states that took action on this issue (Breath, 2002). In January 1998, the California Smoke-free Workplace Act went into effect. It mandates that bars, restaurants, and gambling clubs join all other places of employment in California to prohibit smoking indoors (Breath, 2002).

California is also leading the states in banning smoking near entryways to buildings and at public beaches. In particular, California Assembly Bill 846, which became law on January 1, 2004, prohibits smoking within 20 feet of entryways and windows of all cities, county or state owned or leased buildings, as well as buildings on the campuses of University of California, California State University, and California Community Colleges (California's Clean Air Project, n.d.). Following the state government, 26% of government jurisdictions and 23% of private businesses now have smoke-free entryways policies in place that range from 20 to 50 feet (Center for Tobacco Policy & Organizing, n.d.). There is also a growing trend of tobacco-free beaches in Monterey County and other coastal counties in California (Nordstrand, 2006).

In Salinas, California, the Steps to a Healthier Salinas (STEPS) program initiated a voluntary smoke-free entryways program in 2006 that targeted businesses in the service sector such as hotels, real estate management companies, churches, and law offices in Salinas. These businesses were requested to post decals banning smoking within 20 feet of all their entrances. This program generated 49 positive responses from 73 businesses, an acceptance rate of 67%. Within this group, the acceptance rate of individual small

businesses was 100% (45/45), whereas that of property managers of strip malls and shopping centers was only 14% (4/28).

Research Questions and Goals

The research questions that this project seeks to address are two-fold. First, is the response to voluntary smoke-free entryways program from companies in the *agricultural* sector similar to that from businesses in the *service* sector? Second, what are agricultural employers' attitudes toward the issue of smoke-free workplaces?

This project has two goals. First, it aims for the implementation of the voluntary smoke-free entryways program at as many agricultural companies in Salinas as possible, given the constraints in time and resources. For those companies that participate, the project hopes to generate a healthier workplace for agricultural workers. More broadly, the project hopes to raise awareness of the harmful impact of second-hand smoke among employers and employees in this sector.

The second goal of the project is to achieve a better understanding of the agricultural employers' attitudes toward smoke-free workplace policies. This information may be helpful for health administrators to devise programs that specifically target this sector. For the Monterey County Health Department, the updated database of agricultural employers in Salinas, a by-product of this project, will be useful to implement subsequent intervention programs.

Although 18% of Salinas residents work in the census-designated category of agriculture/mining/fishing/hunting (US, 2005), there have not been many efforts to target this important group. According to the 2006 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS), the percentage of Mexican-American smokers in Salinas increased from 12%

in 2004 to 13.2% in 2006. The percentage of households with at least a smoker also increased from 8% to 9.5% in the same period. If these data are true, Salinas seems to be bucking the national trend of declining smoking rates. While data on smoking for agricultural workers in Salinas are not available, it is likely that these groups are similarly vulnerable to secondhand smoke as are the general population.

Data Collection and Methods of Analysis

This project included an intervention, a follow-up survey, the creation of a database of survey responses, and an analysis of survey data. The intervention was a letter requesting the agricultural companies to implement a voluntary smoke-free entryways policy in their workplaces (Appendix A). This request offered employers information about the dangers of secondhand smoke and the benefits of smoke-free workplaces (Appendix B). This request was similar to that sent to service industry businesses and organizations by the STEPS program a year ago. This time, requests were sent out to 71 agriculture-related companies in Salinas (in early March 2007).

The list of these companies was based on an earlier list created by the STEPS program three years prior for other purposes. This list included many kinds of companies involved in agricultural production such as growing, packing, vineyards and labor contracting. Besides contact information, the list also provided information about the number of employees. For those companies that responded positively to the request, a thank you letter, decals, and related information about smoking cessation were mailed to them to implement the program (Appendix C).

After the mailed request, a follow-up survey (Appendix D) of employers' opinions regarding the voluntary smoke-free entryways program was conducted. This

was a phone survey in which I asked companies why they wanted to participate (if they decided to participate), or why they were not interested in the program (if they declined to participate). A knowledgeable company representative was always the survey respondent. They included the CEO, president, owner, or human resources personnel. The survey questions were both close- and open-ended to solicit a wide range of views from employers about their attitudes toward the program.

Survey responses were entered into an Excel database. Both the response rates to the intervention and survey results were analyzed using Excel. I conducted Fisher's exact tests to see if there was any relation between the number employees of the company and acceptance and decline rates. To determine how employers saw the relevance and benefits of smoke-free entryways to their companies, I summarized their responses to the open-ended questions by four common themes. In addition, I compared the acceptance rate of this project with that of the earlier STEPS program to find out whether agricultural companies shared a similar interest in this kind of program with service companies.

Results

I mailed requests for participation to 71 agricultural companies in Salinas. Among these, 12 requests were returned because the addresses were wrong and could not be forwarded. Follow-up calls to these companies confirmed that they had either moved or closed and could not be contacted further. Therefore, I surveyed a total of 59 companies.

Out of these 59 companies which I was able to contact by mail and phone, 15 (25%) companies accepted the policy, 25 (43%) declined to participate, and 19 (32%) could not commit at this time (Table 1). This latter group avoided a definite answer despite our repeated phone calls, which I consider to mean a polite "no." This attitude,

which I coded as "lack of interest," can perhaps be attributed to their lack of strong interest in the program on the one hand, and their effort to be polite to the County Health Department on the other.

Table 1: Company Responses to Request to Implement a Voluntary Smoke-free Entryways Policy

	Number	%
Acceptance	15	25
Decline	25	43
Lacking interest	19	32
Total responses	59	100

The acceptance rate to our request among agricultural employers (25%) was found to be much lower than the acceptance rate of 100% among small businesses in the service sector in Monterey County cited above. At the same time, the acceptance rate among agricultural companies was almost twice that of property managers of strip malls and shopping centers (of whom 14% accepted a similar program).

Table 2: Responses of Agricultural Companies by Size

	Responses toward the Policy ¹		
No. of Employees in Companies*	Accepted (%)	Declined (%)	Lack of Interest (%)
<300 (n=36)	33	50	17
≥300 (n=15)	20	33	47

^{*}The total number of companies used for this table is 51. There were 8 companies which declined to provide us the number of their employees. The largest company had about 4,000 workers while the smallest had only three employees. $^{1}p = 1$

There was no statistically significant correlation between company size and their acceptance or decline rates (p = 1, Table 2). From Table 2, there seemed to exist a correlation between company size and the lack of interest in our program. However, this correlation was not significant in the 95% confidence interval (p = 0.07). It can thus be

concluded that the size of a company did not seem to determine its attitude toward smoke-free workplaces.

Companies gave various reasons why they accepted the policy, but these reasons can be grouped into four themes (Table 3). Nearly half of all respondents said that the policy would make their employees healthier. About one-quarter of all respondents maintained that the policy was consistent with their existing non-smoking policy which was being enforced only indoors. Nearly one-fifth said that it would create good relations among employees, clients and visitors. A small but significant percentage of answers indicated that the policy would create good relations between their companies and the community.

Table 3: Reasons for Accepting the Voluntary Smoke-free Entryways Policy

Reasons to accept the policy (n=15)	%
Policy makes their employees healthier	43
Policy consistent with existing indoor non-smoking policy	26
Policy creates good personnel relations	18
Policy creates good company/community relations	13
Total	100

Among the reasons given for declining to participate, nearly 40% of all respondents simply said that they did not feel it was necessary (Table 4). Nearly one-third of the answers in this category expressed a strong dislike of the program, which was considered "a waste of time" or "none of government business to intervene." More than one-fourth said the policy was "not in the interest of the company." Finally, a small number of respondents indicated that the companies were too small to bother with the policy.

Table 4: Reasons for Declining the Voluntary Smoke-free Entryways Policy

Reasons to decline to participate (n=25)	%
Policy not necessary	38
Policy a waste of time/smoking not government	
business/personal dislike of policy	29
Policy not in the interest of the company	26
Company too small to bother with policy	7
Total	100

Discussion

Agricultural companies were more interested than property owners, but less interested than small businesses, in instituting a voluntary smoke-free entryways policy. Many of these companies did not want to participate despite the recent changes to California's laws. Why did the attitudes toward smoke-free workplaces among agricultural employers differ from other sectors?

There are at least two possible explanations for the different attitudes among employers in different sectors toward this issue. First, smoking is more prevalent among poorer demographic groups. Data in the US in 1997 showed that the smoking prevalence among blue-collar male workers was nearly twice that among men in white-collar occupations; similar disparity was also observed among women (Sorensen, 2004). There is evidence that employers' attitudes toward smoke-free workplace policy may correlate with smoking prevalence among their workers. Only 43% of the country's food service workers are protected against secondhand smoke while 76% of white-collar workers are (US, 2006).

One hundred percent of small businesses in the service sector accepted the voluntary policy of non-smoking entryways whereas the rate among property managers of strip malls and shopping centers was only 14%. Strip malls and shopping centers employ a much more demographically diverse group of employees than small businesses

such as real estate and law offices. We do not know the prevalence of smoking among agricultural workers and farmers. However, agricultural workers generally have lower income than workers in other blue-collar sectors. The percentage of smokers among agricultural workers may be higher than among the general public, which is about 15% in California (Hanni, n.d.). Therefore, if we assume that companies with more workers who smoke are more reluctant to implement smoke-free workplace policy, we should expect agricultural businesses to have less interest in this program than small businesses in the service sectors.

The second possible explanation for the different attitudes among employers in different sectors toward this issue concerns not the employees but the clients of the businesses. Companies' policy toward smoke-free workplaces may vary depending on the number and kinds of clients they serve. This observation is based on the assumptions that lower-income people smoke more on average and that companies' attitudes reflect the behavior of their clients. However, our results do not confirm the hypothesis that bigger companies that serve more clients pay more attention to smoke-free entryways. I found no such relationship. Company size (measured by the number of employees) did not make a difference in the company response. Among the companies which expressed lack of interest in our program, there were a larger percentage of big companies (≥300 employees) than small ones. Having more clients need not make it more important for a company to maintain smoke-free entryways.

Although the number of clients does not correlate with a particular attitude of a company toward smoke-free workplaces, the kind of clients apparently does. Companies that serve higher-income clients may be more willing than those which serve lower-

income clients to enforce smoke-free entryways. Socially the clients of strip malls and shopping centers are much more diverse than small real estate and law offices and perhaps this was why owners of strip malls and shopping centers were much more reluctant to implement smoke-free entryways policy than small real estate and law offices. This study did not collect data on this topic and it is unclear whether clients of agricultural businesses have high or low incomes. Further research into the influence of clients' income on decision of agricultural companies would be needed to answer this question.

Conclusion

Secondhand smoke is harmful and workers need to be protected from it. This is the main rationale of a broad movement in the United States and other countries today to create smoke-free workplaces. This project aimed to find out the attitudes of a particular group of employers, those in the agricultural sector in Salinas, toward this issue. The greater goal of the project was to raise awareness of this issue among employers and employees in this sector and to create healthier workplaces for those companies that volunteered to participate in the program.

Although only one-quarter of companies accepted the voluntary smoke-free entryways policy, this was not an insignificant number. The project offered insight into why agricultural employers were interested in implementing a smoke-free entryways policy and why they were not. Many employers who participated in the project displayed concern for the health of their employees and for good relations with the community. By combining existing research on the topic and the results of our survey, we also learned the reasons why companies in different sectors may have different attitudes toward

smoke-free workplaces. As more communities and companies implement policies to protect their people and employees from secondhand smoke, it is expected that further research can produce better understanding of this important issue.

Application of Project to Academic Requirements

This project was especially related to an important goal of California State

University, Monterey Bay, which is to serve the diverse people of California, especially
the working class and undereducated and low-income populations. The project also
contributed to another goal of the university, which is to train its students and personnel
to meet critical state and regional needs. Agriculture is one of the most important sectors
in California's economy and the most important sector in the economy of the Central
Coast. Agricultural workers need to have good health so that they can contribute to our
economy and society.

This project was also related to several MLOs. First, in terms of research method, the project helped me understand program design and service delivery, including process and outcome evaluation. Through the project I learned how to obtain information through multiple sources and to develop a basic survey to obtain health and human service information. The second related MLO was system management. This project helped me understand and develop the program management and evaluation skills necessary to manage complex systems of health and human service delivery. These skills included survey administration, program implementation, and outcome assessment. Finally, another related MLO was public policy. The project enabled me to critically analyze an important public policy issues (smoke-free workplaces).

Appendix A: Letter to Agricultural Companies



(Date) (Name) (Business Name) (Address)

Dear (Name),

The majority of adults in California are non-smokers, yet that doesn't mean they are safe from the health hazards from smoking. Eleven major health problems are caused in nonsmokers by *secondhand* smoke, including respiratory disease, heart disease, and lung, nasal, and sinus cancers. Many nonsmokers exposed to *secondhand* smoke suffer immediate symptoms, such as breathing difficulties, eye irritation, headaches, nausea, and asthma attacks.

People are exposed to second-hand smoke when they enter and exit buildings where people are smoking outside or when smoke drifts into a building through doors or windows. To help reduce this form of exposure, Steps to a Healthier Salinas is encouraging local business owners to *voluntarily* designate areas that extend 20 feet from any doors or windows as smoke-free. This effort is *totally voluntary*, but it will help your company create a cleaner and healthier entrance that is attractive to workers, customers, business associates, and reduce legal liabilities of exposing people to secondhand smoke health hazards.

Many properties in Salinas, including La Plazita, Alvin Square, and Portola Plaza representing 38 businesses, have already implemented a smoke-free entryways policy. Additionally, 22 individual businesses, from churches to taquerias, have placed the free decals we provide in their windows.

We are asking you to consider joining fellow business owners and managers in protecting our community's health. Please look over the enclosed materials and sign and fax the enclosed *voluntary* policy to (831) 751-9015. Upon receipt of your signed policy, we will provide your company with window decals stating that the entryways at the property are smoke-free. We can also provide you with more of the enclosed materials.

We would like to add your property's name to the list of businesses making positive changes and helping Salinas become a healthy city to live, work, and play in. To implement a smoke-free entryways policy and receive a free decal, or for more information feel free to contact Steps to a Healthier Salinas at (831) 755-4619.

Best regards,

Lan Tran, Program Intern

Enclosures: Secondhand Smoke Fact Sheet; Sample smoke-free entryways policy; No Smoking sample decal

Appendix B: Secondhand Smoke Fact Sheet



SMOKE-FREE ENTRYWAYS:

REDUCING THE HEALTH HAZARDS OF SECONDHAND SMOKE

What is secondhand smoke and what's wrong with it?

Secondhand smoke is a mixture of the smoke given off by the burning end of tobacco products and the smoke exhaled by smokers. Customers and employees are exposed to secondhand smoke when they enter and exit buildings where people are smoking outside, or when smoke drifts into a building through doors or windows.

The majority (over 84%), of adults in California are non-smokers, yet that doesn't mean they are safe from the health hazards of smoking:

- Secondhand smoke kills as many as 53,000 people each year in the United States.
- Eleven major health problems are caused by secondhand smoke including respiratory disease, lung and nasal sinus cancer and heart disease.
- Many nonsmokers exposed to secondhand smoke suffer immediate symptoms including breathing difficulties, eye irritation, headaches, nausea, and asthma attacks.
- Young children are particularly susceptible to secondhand smoke because their lungs are
 not fully developed. Exposure to secondhand smoke is associated with an increased risk
 for sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), asthma, bronchitis, and pneumonia in young
 children.

Businesses in Salinas are already taking action!

In Salinas so far, 3 properties, La Plazita, Alvin Square, and Portola Plaza representing 38 businesses, have implemented a **voluntary** smoke-free entryways policy. Additionally, 22 individual businesses, from churches to taquerias, have placed the free decals we provide in their windows, designating their entryways as tobacco-free.

What can you do?

Create a smoke-free entryway! By prohibiting smoking within 20 feet of any doors or windows at your business, you are helping reduce involuntary exposure to *secondhand smoke* in your community. Steps to a Healthier Salinas will provide you with a **free** window decal that declares your entryways smoke-free.

Remember:

- Businesses that eliminate smoking around the doorway create a cleaner, friendlier entrance that attracts customers.
- Smoke-free entryways reduce legal liabilities of exposing people to the health hazards of secondhand smoke, especially those with asthma, disabilities and chronic health problems.
- Your customers and employees will thank you!

Make your business a healthy place to eat, shop, work and <u>breathe!</u>
To receive your free decal, please contact Gonzalo Coronado at (831)755-4625.

Appendix C: Thank You Letter, Decal Sample, Sample of the Policy



(Date) (Name) (Business Name) (Address)

Dear (Name),

Thank you for reducing the exposure from second-hand smoke by voluntarily designating areas that extend 20 feet from any doors or windows as smoke-free. This effort is *totally voluntary*, but it will help your company create a cleaner and healthier entrance that is attractive to workers, customers, business associates, and reduce legal liabilities of exposing people to secondhand smoke health hazards.

Enclolosed you will find an attractive smoke free entry way decal for your entryways and windows were smoke may drift.

If you have not already done so please sign and fax the *voluntary* policy to (831) 751-9015. We can always provide you with more of the enclosed materials.

We would like to add your property's name to the list of businesses making positive changes and helping Salinas become a healthy city to live, work, and play in. To implement other worksite wellness policies that fit your organization's goals call Steps to a Healthier Salinas at (831) 755-4619.

Best regards,

Lan Tran Program Intern Steps to a Healthier Salinas

Enclosures: Sample smoke-free entryways policy; No Smoking sample decal



No Smoking

Within 20 feet of all entryways and windows

Se Prohíbe Fumar

Dentro de 20 pies de todas las entradas y ventanas



Steps to a Healthier Salinas is an initiative of the Monterey County Health Department



Smoke-Free Entryways Policy

Due to the deadly effects of secondhand smoke and concern for the health of patrons and employees, it is the policy of Company that tobacco use will not be permitted within 20 feet of any entrance, exit, or operable window at Property in Salinas, California.

This policy extends to any entity that leases, rents, or otherwise holds events on the property.

Property Owner/Manager (Print)	Date
Signature	



Steps to a Healthier Salinas is an initiative of the Monterey County Health Department



*This document is not legally binding. It is to be an official statement of company policy and is not enforced by the Monterey County Health Department.

Appendix D: Follow up Survey

Agricultural Companies Interest in Non-Smoking Policy Request Survey

Comp	any Name:				
Date:					
We re	Hello, my name is Lan Tran and I am calling on behalf of the Health Department. We recently sent you a letter that provided information on a smoke-free entryways policy for your company's entryways.				
For companies that responded "Yes" I have two questions to ask you about your company's interest in this policy.					
1.	In order to increase the appeal of this program and business participation, may I ask you the top three reasons why you like the program?				
2.	Was there anything in the letter that we could have improved to encourage you to consider a smoke-free entryways policy for your business?				
	ompanies that responded "Not Yet" etwo questions to ask you about your company's interest in this policy.				
1.	We appreciate that business owners have many other issues and agricultural businesses can be particularly busy at certain times of the year. We really hope that you will eventually decide to participate in this voluntary program for a smoke-free entryways policy for your company. Was there anything in the letter that we could have improved to encourage you to consider a smoke-free entryways policy for your business at this time?				
2.	When would it be good to contact you again? (Month)				

For companies that responded "No"

I have one question to ask you about why your company was not interested in this policy.

1. We appreciate that business owners have many other issues and agricultural businesses can be particularly busy at certain times of the year. We really hope that you will eventually decide to participate in this voluntary program for a smoke-free entryways policy for your company. What were the top three reasons why you decided to not have a smoke-free entryways policy for your company at this time?

For all:

Thank you for taking the time to answer our questions. If you have interest in other health materials produced by the Steps to a Healthier Salinas program, please feel free to call Gonzalo Coronado at 755-4619.

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