Protecting Homes from Thirdhand Smoke

Thirdhand smoke is the toxic chemical residue left behind by tobacco smoke. It accumulates in carpets, walls, and furniture, becomes embedded in building materials, and persists for years after smoking stops. [1,2]

- Thirdhand smoke polluted buildings expose occupants to more than 10 toxic chemicals listed on California's Prop 65.[2-5]
- 96% of Californians want to know if the home they are about to buy contains thirdhand smoke residue.[7]

- Evidence of thirdhand smoke pollution is often masked in real estate transactions.[6]
- Thirdhand smoke is hard to remove and complete renovation may be required.[8,9]
- Thirdhand smoke pollution decreases home value and hurts the real estate market.[6,10]

Solutions to Consider:

Disclosure in Real Estate Transactions

Like disclosure of other pollutants such as lead, disclosure of past tobacco use and present thirdhand smoke levels allows consumers to make informed decisions.

- Expand home inspection standards to include visual inspection for evidence of thirdhand smoke (e.g., discoloration, burn marks, odor, cigarette butts).
- Disclosure statements should include:
  - Tobacco use by previous owners/residents of the home.
  - Results of thirdhand smoke environmental tests.
  - Description of cleaning and renovation efforts used to remove thirdhand smoke before listing the home for sale.
- Prohibit sellers and agents from masking the smell of stale tobacco in the home, for example with scents or fans.

Prevention

Effective prevention will reduce the further accumulation of thirdhand smoke.[11]

- Make education about sources and harms of thirdhand smoke part of every real estate transaction.
- Prohibit smoking within 25 feet of another property to strengthen comprehensive, smokefree policies.
- Require homes with children under age 6 to be free from thirdhand smoke contamination, as is done with lead.[12]

Remediation

Remediation and restoration can turn thirdhand smoke polluted homes into homes free of tobacco smoke toxicants.

- Test for thirdhand smoke pollution in all residential real estate transactions and identify properties with excessive pollution levels.
- Set standards for thirdhand smoke pollution to define homes free of thirdhand smoke.
- Establish a voluntary "Tobacco-Free Home" certification program to incentivize removal and remediation of thirdhand smoke prior to sale.

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Our mission is to share information, resources, and technical support with California's residents, communities, businesses, health care professionals, and policymakers about the toxic legacy of tobacco smoke residue and to achieve indoor environments that are 100% free of tobacco smoke toxicants.

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