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Actress Bai Ling dazzles Roger Ebert. **SHOWCASE, PAGE 45**

TUESDAY,
OCTOBER 25, 2005

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Weather forecast: Pages 2, 71

ANALYZING THE PROPOSED CITY SMOKING BAN

WHAT'S REALLY IN THE AIR

Sun-Times measures how polluted the air is in 25 bars, restaurants and other places around the city

The controversial smoking ban is set for a City Council Health Committee vote on Thursday.

STORY BY LORI RACKL AND CHRIS FUSCO ON PAGES 8-9

HOW POLLUTED IS THE CITY'S

Federal standards would call it 'unhealthy' for some workers

BY LORI RACKL AND CHRIS FUSCO
Staff Reporters

As debate rages over a proposal to ban smoking in bars, restaurants and virtually all indoor public places in the city, the Chicago Sun-Times used an air monitor to find out just how polluted those venues can get.

The newspaper found that workers logging a typical eight-hour shift in 12 of 22 places that allowed smoking would breathe in pollution levels that exceed federal clean-air thresholds.

Pollution was so bad in one room of one tavern, employees would be breathing air the Environmental Protection Agency deems "hazardous" — the EPA's worst category that's rarely seen these days except in the event of forest fires or volcanic eruptions. There's nothing illegal about that, however, as the EPA doesn't regulate indoor air.

Overall, indoor air pollution was on average 39 times higher in venues that permitted smoking than in those that didn't.

The controversial smoking ban, set for a City Council Health Committee vote on Thursday, is aimed largely at protecting workers.

But a growing body of evidence suggests that even the time it takes to have a beer at a bar can have health consequences.

Research is telling

Studies have shown that fewer than 30 minutes of secondhand smoke exposure can spark potentially dangerous changes in the blood and arteries — changes similar to what's seen in smokers.

Short-term exposure to tiny particles released by burning cigarettes, among other sources, also has been linked to increased hospital stays and emergency room visits among people with asthma and other lung conditions.

These microscopic particles, called PM 2.5, are what the Sun-Times measured at 25 bars, restaurants and other establishments that would be affected by the smoking ban. They're among the many ingredients in secondhand smoke, which contains at least 250 toxic or cancer-causing chemicals, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Some critics of smoking bans dispute the research that labels secondhand smoke a health hazard. The CDC and EPA say the hazards are well documented.

Indoor air: 'last frontier'

The EPA keeps a close eye on PM 2.5 — responsible for an estimated 15,000 heart-related and stroke deaths each year in the United States — to make sure levels don't get too high outdoors.

But the agency has no control over indoor air, the "last frontier" in air pollution, according to Jim Repace, a secondhand-smoke expert who worked in the EPA's air policy office for 19 years.



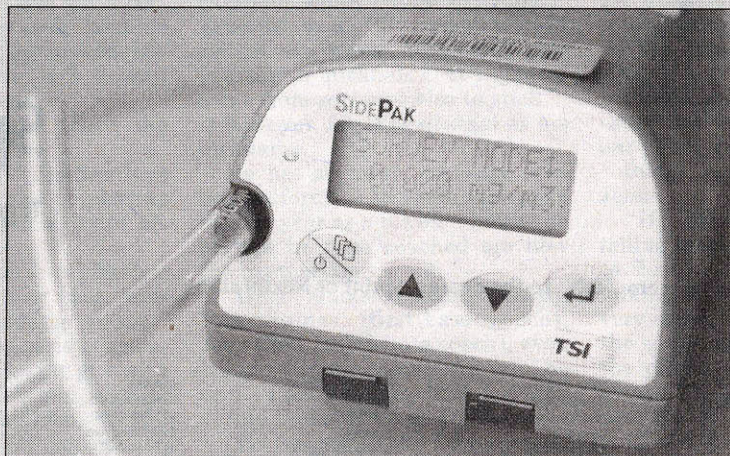
Lois Jenkins of Chicago holds a cigarette while marking her bingo card at Nativity of Our Lord Parish. Bingo halls would be included in the proposed smoking ordinance. —SCOTT STEWART/SUN-TIMES

HOW THE TESTS WERE DONE

To test pollution levels, the Sun-Times obtained a TSI SidePak AM510 air monitor (pictured at right) from Ashtead Technology Rentals in Chicago. The American Lung Association of Metropolitan Chicago helped show reporters Lori Rackl and Chris Fusco how to use the machine.

At each of the 25 venues the reporters visited, Rackl carried the monitor in her purse, with its intake tube sticking out to continuously suck in air samples. The reporters stayed at least a half hour in each place, following a testing protocol used by researchers who have conducted similar studies.

The monitor measured microscopic pollutants known as PM 2.5, which stands for airborne particulate matter measuring at least 2.5 microns, or 1/30th the width of a human hair. The news-



paper measured PM 2.5 because the pollutant is released in large amounts from burning tobacco, making it an accepted marker for secondhand smoke.

The monitor's readings were downloaded and sent to Mark Travers, an epidemiologist at Roswell Park Cancer Institute in

Buffalo, N.Y., who has extensive experience testing secondhand smoke.

Using the monitor's minute-by-minute readings of PM 2.5, Travers computed the average amount of pollution the reporters were exposed to at each place.



Amanda Starcevic, 34, a non-smoker, blames her chronic lung condition on secondhand smoke. She's been a bartender and waitress since she was 21.

—JOHN H. WHITE/SUN-TIMES

"We've got rights, too," Florio said, her Viceroy cigarettes resting near her bingo cards.

And if the city council passes the ban?

"I'd go somewhere else," she said.

That's precisely what worries some bar owners and the state's powerful restaurant lobby: A smoking ban would be unhealthy — for business.

David Gevercer, owner of the Matchbox, an intimate bar just west of downtown that had some of the highest pollution readings recorded by the air monitor, doesn't buy research that concluded tax receipts from New York City restaurants and bars increased one year after that city's smoking ban took effect.

"It's a horrible idea," Gevercer said of Chicago's proposed ban. "All of these little taverns would be forced out of business."

The bad-for-the-bottom-line argument doesn't sway Amanda Starcevic, who's worked as a waitress and bartender since she was 21. She's now 34 and has a chronic lung condition. The non-smoker from River West chalks up her diagnosis to secondhand smoke.

"It's ridiculous that people would be willing to put the health of their workers above profits," said Starcevic, who's cut back her hours behind the bar to one night a week. "I would love to go back in time and give up half my money to regain my health."

Pollution 195 times higher

Anti-smoking forces pushing for the ban in Chicago point to health successes elsewhere. In Helena, Mont., for example, hospital admissions for heart attacks dropped 40 percent during a six-month period when indoor smoking was banned, according to a study published last year in the British Medical Journal. Heart attack rates returned to normal when the courts suspended the ban.

to EPA's outdoor standards, which are based on 24 hours of exposure to the tiny particles. The analysis assumed workers logged an 8-hour shift in pollution levels recorded by the air monitor and spent the remaining 16 hours of the day breathing "normal" air.

Half of the 10 tested locations that allowed smoking but didn't exceed clean-air standards still logged PM 2.5 levels high enough to pose a health hazard to children,

seniors and people with heart or lung disease.

One such place was the basement of Nativity of Our Lord Catholic Church in Bridgeport, the parish where Mayor Daley grew up. The church hosts twice-weekly bingo games popular with smokers, such as LaVerne Florio, 77.

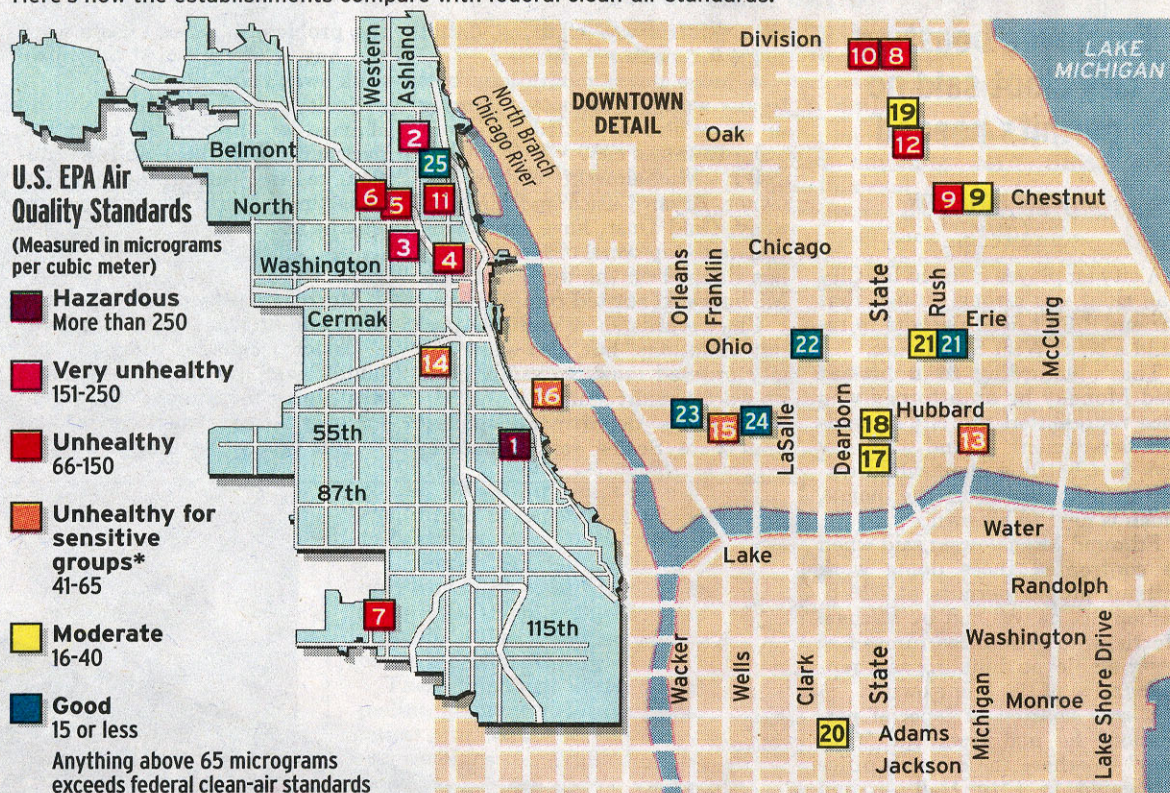
Bingo ladies, bar owners fuming

Florio bristles at the idea of snuffing out smoking at bingo.

INDOOR AIR?

AIR RESTAURANT AND BAR WORKERS ARE EXPOSED TO

Using a portable air monitor, the Sun-Times went to 25 Chicago bars, restaurants and other venues to measure microscopic particles that come from secondhand smoke. An epidemiologist used that data to compute average pollution levels based on spending eight hours — a typical work shift — in each place. Here's how the establishments compare with federal clean-air standards:



Alderman: We have enough votes to pass smoking ban

BY FRAN SPIELMAN
City Hall Reporter

Given three weeks to compromise on a proposed Chicago smoking ban, the Illinois Restaurant Association responded with a "press release" in a classic "stalling tactic" that will not hold off Thursday's showdown vote, an alderman said Monday.

Ald. Pat O'Connor (40th), Mayor Daley's unofficial City Council floor leader, said his own head count shows the votes are there — both in the Health Committee chaired by chief sponsor Ed Smith (28th) and in the full City Council — to ban smoking in virtually all of indoor Chicago.

Without a viable and concrete alternative proposed by the restaurant association, O'Connor said he expects the high-stakes vote to take place Thursday. Last-minute intervention by a top mayoral aide postponed the showdown three weeks ago. But that will not happen twice, O'Connor said.

The mayor has "tried to encourage two sides of an argument to . . . come up with a compromise. The restaurant association has not come up with a compromise. They've come up with a

press release . . . that essentially says, 'This is what we can accept. This is what we can't.' . . . It's essentially a stalling tactic to take the heat off."

O'Connor said there is virtually no support for allowing restaurants, bars and bowling alleys to apply for a "smoking license" with revenues earmarked for smoking cessation programs. That's the compromise that restaurant association President Colleen McShane is pushing.

McShane said she sent a letter to Smith last Friday that outlined a realistic compromise. The letter offered to make "all dining areas in restaurants smoke-free," and proposed allowing certain businesses, including stand-alone bars, to apply for smoking licenses.

"Our compromise will prohibit smoking in 99 percent of the places outlined in Ald. Smith's proposed smoking ban," McShane said.

On Monday, Smith refused to say whether he will forge ahead with a vote at Thursday's Health Committee meeting. Daley was saying little. "Everybody wants some form of compromise. I think they'll be able to work that out," he said.

In the Sun-Times analysis, the recipe for high pollution levels was simple. Take lots of smokers and put them in smaller spaces — places like the Matchbox, Club Foot near Ukrainian Village, the Long Room in Lake View and Jimmy's Woodlawn Tap in Hyde Park.

Jimmy's, a popular hangout for University of Chicago students, was the smokiest place tested by the Sun-Times. Owner Bill Callahan said he wouldn't oppose a ban as long as everyone had to abide by it and no special provisions would allow smoking in some places but not others.

"Since I quit smoking, I certainly changed my attitude," said Callahan, who gave up cigarettes almost two years ago when his first grandchild was born.

Ventilation helps

Pollution levels logged at a table in the back room of Jimmy's were

195 times higher than in non-smoking places. Callahan said the back room of the three-room tavern tends to get especially smoky because it has the worst ventilation.

Good ventilation, high ceilings and smoke-filtration systems can be effective in mitigating secondhand smoke to varying degrees, experts say. Two places that touted their investments in such systems and said they service them monthly, Gibsons Bar & Steakhouse and ESPN Zone, both had relatively low pollution levels when the Sun-Times visited them.

Still, the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers says no current technology should be relied upon to control secondhand smoke, and "the only way to effectively eliminate" the health risks associated with it is "to ban smoking activity."

COMPUTING POLLUTING: THE METHOD BEHIND THE MICROGRAMS

The chart on this page is based on pollution readings the air monitor recorded every minute that two Chicago Sun-Times reporters spent in each of the 25 locations.

Epidemiologist Mark Travers averaged those readings to calculate the reporters' exposure to "PM 2.5" — tiny pollutants that come from multiple sources but are released in large quantities from burning tobacco.

This analysis assumes those average PM 2.5 levels would be what a worker or patron would be exposed to during eight hours in each venue — a protocol used by researchers who have conducted similar studies.

To put pollution levels of the 25 places in per-

spective, the Sun-Times compared them with clean-air standards set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The EPA doesn't set standards for indoor air, just outdoor air. And its standards are based on 24-hour averages, not 8-hour increments.

The 24-hour averages for PM 2.5 shown at right were calculated by adding the 8-hour pollution level in each establishment to what a typical Chicagoan would encounter the remaining 16 hours of the day.

That level, 15 micrograms per cubic meter, is based on state readings last year from the most frequently used outdoor PM 2.5 testing site in the city.

	Pollution level (micrograms per cubic meter)	When visited	Of note
1	Jimmy's Woodlawn Tap 401 1172 E. 55th	Wednesday, Oct. 12 11:10 p.m.-11:58 p.m.	-Sat in back room of 3-room tavern -Moderately crowded, very heavy smoking
2	The Long Room 172 1612 W. Irving Park	Thursday, Oct. 13 10:12 p.m.-10:44 p.m.	-Sat in middle of long, narrow bar -Moderately crowded, heavy smoking
3	Club Foot 158 1824 W. Augusta	Friday, Oct. 14 10:40 p.m.-11:13 p.m.	-Sat at table toward front of bar -Very crowded, heavy smoking
4	The Matchbox 148 770 N. Milwaukee	Tuesday, Oct. 11 9:49 p.m.-10:25 p.m.	-Sat in middle of narrow, triangle-shaped bar -Moderately crowded, moderate smoking
5	Marie's Riptide Lounge 119 1745 W. Armitage	Wednesday, Oct. 12 2:02 a.m.-2:40 a.m.	-Sat at table in middle of bar; front door open -Moderately crowded, heavy smoking
6	Fireside Bowl 111 2646 W. Fullerton	Friday, Oct. 14 9:40 p.m.-10:14 p.m.	-Stood near back of 16-lane bowling alley; front door open -Very crowded, moderate smoking
7	Cork & Kerry 92 10614 S. Western	Wednesday, Oct. 12 10:02 p.m.-10:38 p.m.	-Stood in middle of bar -Moderately crowded, moderate smoking
8	Finn McCool's 85 15 W. Division	Sunday, Oct. 16 10:06 p.m.-10:40 p.m.	-Stood in front and back of large lower-level bar -Very crowded, light smoking
9	Mike Ditka's 79 100 E. Chestnut -Upstairs cigar bar -Downstairs bar	Sunday, Oct. 16 9:18 p.m.-9:51 p.m. 8:10 p.m.-9:17 p.m.	-Sat at table near stairwell; heavy cigar smoke -Sat in corner of smoking section; light smoking
10	The Lodge 71 21 W. Division	Sunday, Oct. 16 11:02 p.m.-11:32 p.m.	-Stood near back of small, low-ceilinged bar -Moderately crowded, light smoking
11	O'Malley's West 67 2249 N. Lincoln	Thursday, Oct. 13 11:14 p.m.-11:45 p.m.	-Sat in middle of bar -Very crowded, moderate smoking
12	Jilly's Piano Bar 66 1007 N. Rush	Friday, Oct. 14 11:47 p.m.-12:17 a.m.	-Stood in back of bar; large front windows open -Very crowded, moderate smoking
13	Billy Goat Tavern 58 430 N. Michigan	Tuesday, Oct. 11 7:23 p.m.-8:07 p.m.	-Sat at table near bar -Moderately crowded, light smoking
14	Nativity of Our Lord Parish Bingo 57 653 W. 37th	Wednesday, Oct. 12 8:41 p.m.-9:24 p.m.	-Walked through cavernous church basement -More than 100 bingo players, heavy smoking
15	Gene & Georgetti 55 500 N. Franklin	Wednesday, Oct. 12 1:26 p.m.-2:37 p.m.	-Sat at table in smoking section -Very crowded, light cigarette and cigar smoking
16	City Pool Hall 41 640 W. Hubbard	Thursday, Oct. 13 12:23 a.m.-1:16 a.m.	-Stood at pool table in center of large hall -Sparsely crowded, light smoking
17	Harry Caray's 38 33 W. Kinzie	Tuesday, Oct. 11 5:55 p.m.-6:29 p.m.	-Sat at table in middle of bar -Moderately crowded, light smoking
18	Rockit Bar & Grill 33 22 W. Hubbard	Tuesday, Oct. 11 8:13 p.m.-9:04 p.m.	-Sat at table in non-smoking section -Moderately crowded, light smoking at bar
19	Gibsons Bar & Steakhouse 30 1028 N. Rush	Thursday, Oct. 13 5:41 p.m.-6:55 p.m.	-Sat at table in smoking section -Very crowded, very light smoking
20	Elephant & Castle 28 100 W. Adams	Wednesday, Oct. 12 7:08 p.m.-7:57 p.m.	-Sat at table in non-smoking section -Very crowded, light smoking in bar
21	ESPN Zone 21 43 E. Ohio -Downstairs bar -Upstairs bar/game area	Saturday, Oct. 15 7:33 p.m.-8:42 p.m. 7:02 p.m.-7:32 p.m.	-Sat at bar; light smoking -Sat in non-smoking area
22	McDonald's 14 600 N. Clark	Friday, Oct. 14 7:16 p.m.-8:07 p.m.	-Non-smoking throughout
23	Starbucks 12 414 N. Orleans	Friday, Oct. 14 3:38 p.m.-4:16 p.m.	-Non-smoking throughout
24	Lou Mainati's 11 439 N. Wells	Saturday, Oct. 15 8:55 p.m.-9:42 p.m.	-Sat in non-smoking section
25	Ann Sather 10 929 W. Belmont	Sunday, Oct. 16 9:39 a.m.-10:22 a.m.	-Non-smoking throughout

SOURCES: TSI SidePak AM510 air monitor provided by Ashted Technology Rentals in Chicago; Roswell Park Cancer Institute epidemiologist Mark Travers, U.S. EPA, Illinois EPA, Sun-Times research

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