

## **Smoking strikes out at youth sporting events – Rankin Ledger**

Athletes and spectators attending Mississippi youth sporting events will now enjoy smoke-free air, thanks to recent legislation. The new law, passed in the 2010 session and signed by Gov. Haley Barbour, prohibits smoking within 100 feet of a facility where people under age 18 are participating in athletic events. It also prohibits smoking at indoor youth sporting events.

"Everyone deserves to breathe smoke-free air," said Tawni Basden, director of the Tobacco-Free Coalition of Rankin, Scott and Simpson Counties. "This new law protects kids and adults who attend youth sporting events from the harmful effects of secondhand smoke."

The law takes effect July 1 and imposes warnings for first-time offenders and fines on repeat offenders.

"There is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke. Five hundred and fifty Mississippi nonsmokers die each year from secondhand smoke," said Roy Hart, director of the Office of Tobacco Control at the Mississippi State Department of Health. "While a comprehensive tobacco-free policy that includes spit tobacco would be even more effective, this new policy will offer protection from secondhand smoke for both children and adults who attend youth sporting events."

"Exposure to secondhand smoke causes heart disease and lung cancer in adults and increases the risk for sudden infant death syndrome, ear problems and more severe asthma in children," said Hart.

"Eliminating secondhand smoke at youth sporting events allows kids to focus on playing their game," said Basden. "No one can be a good athlete while they are inhaling secondhand smoke."

For more information on the dangers of secondhand smoke, call the Tobacco-Free Coalition of Rankin, Scott and Simpson Counties at (601) 933-9174 or visit [www.TobaccoFreeMS.org](http://www.TobaccoFreeMS.org).

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