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Forum 11: Do ASHRAE Engineers Have the Tools to Design "Acceptable" Smoking Areas in Restaurants and Bars?

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"InterACTIVE" best describes the fifty ASHRAE participants controversially discussing the implications of designing smoking sections for restaurants and bars. As one might anticipate, the discussion quickly expanded to include all areas within commercial buildings that are cohabited by smokers and non-smokers. It was suggested that Standard 62R implies that one cannot achieve "acceptable" air quality if there is smoking. But what is "acceptable" to a smoker and a voluntary non-smoker enjoying an after-dinner drink in the dedicated smoking lounge? Once an engineer proceeds with the design of a dedicated smoking room, ASHRAE provides little guidance for achieving an environment within the smoking room that has a "perceived acceptability" to its voluntary occupants.

It was clearly stated that there is more to ventilating a smoking room than the quantity of outdoor air being supplied - ventilation effectiveness plays a major role. Furthermore, the application of air-to-air energy recovery equipment can make higher ventilation rates more attractive to the end-user, but education is needed within this building segment. It was noted by participant that within the hospitality sector, designs that fall short of Standard 62-89 often slide through the design review process at the local level. Although one participant discussed a theoretical method for calculating one's exposure to side-stream smoke, the group's response was that it is too late for this approach.

It was suggested that there is a need to educate the end-user (i.e., restaurant owner) as to the benefits of an "engineered" solution to effectively isolate and remove smoke within their facility. There is a similar need to transfer knowledge to contractors.

There was consensus that ASHRAE should develop guidelines for designing smoking rooms within commercial buildings that would package the existing "tools," providing a range of practical solutions to the design engineer for both new construction and retrofit. It was suggested that TC 5.5 partner with other TC's to develop a design guideline that would present a menu of solutions.

Highlights (from the evaluations):

- Package the tools!
- Next step is to sponsor a seminar with case studies and design ideas

- ASHRAE's "just say no" policy seems to be non-constructive
- More info on what is known about "acceptable" levels of smoke - both health and perception.
- Education (e.g., video) for restaurant managers encouraging use of engineering and the application of existing "tools."
- Engineers need to become salespeople to "sell" cost-effective solutions

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