

Airline smoking ban gains support

Studies show problems with ventilation, passive smoke

judgment call and we're seeing more and more exercising of that judgment."

• Air Canada, which 18 months ago began offering no-smoking flights within its high-density computer triangle of Ottawa, Toronto and Montreal, has made the 90-day experiment permanent.

Jim Frazer, who was project director of the National Research Council study, has watched smoking become taboo in the full range of public gathering places, from elevators to hockey arenas.

"Look at the trends," he suggested. "Hotels across the country are offering no-smoking rooms, even floors where the rooms have never been smoked in and people serving these rooms don't smoke."

"If you put that, and a helluva lot more together, you would have to say, 'Why not on aircraft?'"

In fact, Frazer said, throughout the course of the council's study, he found only one professional group with anything good to say about smoking on airplanes: the mechanics.

"They said if it wasn't for the yellow stains left by tobacco smoke," he explained, "they wouldn't be able to see where door seals were leaking."

The Tobacco Institute, a Washington group representing 11 tobacco companies, lost its battle against the recent House vote. But Merriman is confident that pressures from tobacco-growing states will extinguish the bill's future in the Senate.

Studies written for his organization, he said, show that in-flight smoking poses "no hazard to passengers or flight attendants."

they are to negate the ill effects (sneezing, eye irritation, headaches) of exposure to cigarette smoke, yet they generally are getting only 7 to 20 cubic feet a minute.

The study "unanimously and forcefully" recommended a federal ban on smoking on all domestic commercial air flights.

• Examination of in-flight smoking problems (including the safety hazards of bathroom fires and abrupt landings to settle flights) among passengers arguing their smoking rights) has produced close scrutiny of ventilation equipment used to cleanse and circulate cabin air.

These environmental control units (typically three ECUs, or power packs, are carried aboard wide-bodied aircraft such as the Boeing 747) process outside air for cabin use.

Joe Schwind, a director of engineering for the Air Line Pilots Association, contended that the units were adequate but were underused by airline captains who routinely turn down or shut down the power packs to save fuel. In the process, ventilation is reduced to the recirculation of stale air.

• Four years ago, said Daphne Dicine of Phoenix-based America West Airlines, airlines generally divided seats 50-50 between smoking and non-smoking sections. "Now, on a 22-row airplane, the non-smoking section is the first 18 rows," she said.

A spokesperson for another airline said that rather than stir up the majority of non-smokers, more captains are "taking advantage of any situation to declare a non-smoking flight. A party of schoolchildren. One person who might have emphysema. It's a

• Last month, the House approved legislation banning smoking on domestic airline flights of two hours or less.

Celebration was light. For even if the measure survives the Senate, predict airline associations and lobbyists for cleaner cabin air, it will be little more than a prelude to the inevitable: A federal ban on all smoking on all domestic flights of any duration.

And within five years.

"I wouldn't be surprised if it was before then," a spokesman for one air transport group said. "But as my group is not supporting the smoking ban, that is my personal opinion and it must remain completely off the record."

On the record, however, are government health studies and voluntary innovations within airlines that indicate a clear trend on the long-enduring issue of smoking at 30,000 feet.

• The National Cancer Institute at the request of Surgeon General C. Everett Koop is preparing a new study of cotinine levels, the metabolized residue of nicotine, in non-smoking flight attendants. Cotinine is measured through saliva tests and urinalyses, said study leader Margaret Mattson, and is a standard determination of the effects, if any, of passive exposure to smoke.

Mattson declined to discuss details of the testing. But in his announcement, Koop said one he did not identify, which has agreed to cooperate with federal researchers.

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By PAUL DEAN



C. Everett Koop

Ordered Cancer Institute study

"smoking three or four cigarettes a flight," just by inhaling the passive smoke," he said.

• Koop's review was ordered five months after the National Research Council, an arm of the National Academy of Sciences, reported in 1986 that airline ventilation practices have created a situation in which "cabin air ventilation (is) in violation of the building codes for most other indoor environments."

Further, said the 300-page report ordered by Congress, the nation's 70,000 flight attendants are exposed to smoke levels similar to those of a person living with a pack-a-day smoker.

Non-smoking passengers, it noted, need to receive 50 to 75 cubic feet of clean cabin air per minute if

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