

## EPA Defines Hazards of Tobacco Smoke

The smoke is beginning to clear around the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) long-awaited draft review of the health effects of passive smoking, and it looks like the agency is ready to characterize environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) as a serious carcinogen—one presenting similar risks to such EPA-designated heavy hitters as asbestos, benzene, and radon.

An EPA draft review of the health effects of passive smoking on the respiratory system states that ETS belongs in the "Group A" category of known human carcinogens—a classification now applied to only about 2 dozen substances. EPA won't take any regulatory action itself, since a 1976 law expressly forbids it to regulate tobacco smoke. But an EPA official predicts that when the draft becomes final, a move expected in the next several months, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and other state and federal regulatory agencies will be forced to clamp down on public exposure to tobacco smoke.

The review confirms and extends some of the fears about the effects of ETS on respiratory illnesses. The draft blames ETS for causing between 2500 and 3000 lung cancer deaths annually in nonsmokers, including both "never-smokers" and former smokers. These numbers are in line with some previous reviews, which suggest that nonsmokers who live with a smoking spouse are about 30% more likely to die of lung cancer than other nonsmokers.

But before public health officials can chalk up a victory, the draft review must survive comments from a committee of EPA's Science Advisory Board, which met to examine the draft earlier this week after *Science* went to press. And there's a reason (aside from the obvious one) for ETS policy-watchers to hold their breaths—the December 1990 version of the draft went up in smoke after getting bogged down in revisions last year.



Science palace. Will NSF see its new building next year?

## Budget Woes Put NSF's New Home in Doubt

The tight budgets for science foreshadowed by the actions of several key House subcommittees (*Science*, 10 July, p. 157) could affect more than research programs—they could also derail the

National Science Foundation's (NSF) plans to move its staff from downtown Washington, D.C. to a Northern Virginia suburb.

Although most NSF staffers have been nervous that a move from the agency's current location two blocks from the White

House could lessen its clout by making it harder to mingle with decision makers, they would happily trade their cramped quarters and quirky elevators for a larger and more modern facility. Last fall, the General Services Administration found an acceptable site, and NSF has been gearing up to begin moving next February.

But with the possibility that NSF might face a flat budget in fiscal 1993, the move suddenly looks problematic. While the appropriations process is far from over, NSF director Walter Massey is apparently not very optimistic about receiving the \$16 million the Bush Administration requested for the move. Last week he assembled his program directors and essentially told them: no money, no move. According to one program director, Massey made it clear that he has no intention of taking the necessary funds out of the R&D budget.

## Senate Begins to Save the SSC

The future of the Superconducting Super Collider (SSC), which the House of Representatives voted to kill on 17 June, is suddenly looking brighter.

Last Tuesday, the Senate energy appropriations subcommittee approved \$550 million next year for the \$8.25 billion accelerator. While still short of the Administration's requested funding of \$650 million, the subcommittee appropriation holds the

promise not only of resurrecting the SSC but of keeping it on schedule. "Anything less than \$550 million would force us to draw out the schedule and cost more money," says one Department of Energy (DOE) official.

This vote, however, is but the first of many hurdles for high-energy physics' megaproject. While subcommittee members said they expected SSC funding to withstand expected opposition in the full committee, SSC opponents will try again to kill the project on

the Senate floor later this summer. And even if the full Senate does vote to keep the project, a House-Senate conference committee will still have to reconcile the conflicting desires of both chambers—and the result of such a deliberation is still anyone's guess.

Even as the SSC prospers, however, DOE's other energy research programs are taking a hit. Following the House, the Senate subcommittee voted to keep energy research budgets flat, with no adjustment for inflation.

## Palomar Gets a (Possibly Temporary) Reprieve

Astronomers at the Palomar Observatory can relax now that the San Diego city council has voted down an attempt to re-introduce high-pressure sodium street lamps to the downtown area, affirming the council's 1984 vote to use only low-pressure street lamps that would spare astronomers unwanted glare. But the proponents of the high-pressure lamps could still have the last word.

These boosters argue that the high-pressure lamps, which give off whiter light than existing low-pressure lamps, are needed to provide better security and to prevent crime. Although a vote to restore the lights was originally scheduled for late April, the council delayed taking up the measure in order to let the scientific community work out a compromise with the

high-pressure lamp faction. Palomar scientists, however, fought to retain a total ban.

The council went along and voted 5-4 on 29 June to maintain the city's ban on high-pressure lights. Scientific considerations, however, were only part of the story: A majority on the council actually favored the whiter lights, but one member felt the city couldn't afford the \$8 million a switchover is estimated to cost.

As a result, Palomar's victory could be ephemeral. Council member and science historian Bob Filner, who strongly supported Palomar's position, is running for Congress and could leave the council this fall. Even if he stays, Filner says Palomar's victory is "politically shaky." Come the new year, Palomar may again risk getting caught in the glare of lights from the big city.