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NEWS RELEASE

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Surgeon General Calls for Stronger Efforts to Reduce Female Smoking

(Salt Lake City, UT) - Since the first Surgeon General's report on women and smoking in 1980, nearly three million U.S. women have died prematurely from smoking, according to an updated and expanded Surgeon General's Report released today. U.S Surgeon General David Satcher called for stronger local efforts to implement proven solutions to reduce tobacco use among women and girls. These steps are necessary because women have been specifically targeted by the tobacco industry, which attempts to associate tobacco use with slimness and attractiveness.

The report calls for:

- increasing public awareness of the devastating impact of smoking on women's health
- exposing and countering the tobacco industry's targeting of women
- encouraging public health policymakers, educators, medical professionals, and women's organizations to work for policies and programs that deglamorize and discourage smoking
- reducing disparities related to tobacco use and its health effects among different ethnic/racial populations
- decreasing nonsmokers' exposure to environmental tobacco smoke
- mounting comprehensive statewide tobacco control programs proven to be effective in reducing and preventing tobacco use.

"The gap between male and female smoking rates has narrowed dramatically in the past 20 years in the United States, resulting in disturbing increases in smoking-related diseases among women," said Dr. Tamara Lewis, Chair, Utah Tobacco Advisory Committee. In Utah, 11.3 percent of adult women and 11.8 percent of girls in grades 9-12 smoke. (Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System/ Utah Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 1999) These percentages equate to approximately 90,000 Utah women and 8,600 Utah girls (grades 9-12) who smoke.

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According to the Surgeon General, lung cancer is by far the leading cause of cancer deaths among women. "Women not only share the same health risks as men, but are also faced with health consequences that are unique to women, including pregnancy complications, problems with menstrual function, and cervical cancer," Dr. Satcher said. Lung cancer rates in women have now overtaken breast cancer rates. Tobacco use also leads to heart disease, emphysema, and reproductive health problems such as infertility and miscarriage.

The best thing a woman can do for her health and her family's health is to quit smoking. If she can quit smoking for good, her family will no longer be exposed to the risks of second hand smoke, which is associated with ear infections, colds, flu, asthma, and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). If women quit smoking now, their kids will be less likely to smoke.

"To address this problem, we have state and local programs that provide smoking cessation services for pregnant women and new mothers where the highest risk exists," says Lena Dibble, Tobacco Prevention Program Specialist, Utah Department of Health. "School and community based programs for youth provide valuable resources and support to prevent them from starting the addictive habit and help those who want to quit." The statewide "Truth about Tobacco" media campaign communicates the not so glamorous facts about tobacco and provides information about resources. The truth is that smoking leads to wrinkles and yellow teeth, it is not an effective method of weight control and it can kill.

The Federal Trade Commission has reported that cigarette companies spent \$8.24 billion on advertising and promotions in 1999 in the U.S., a 22.3 percent increase from the \$6.73 billion spent in 1998.

A full copy of *Women and Smoking: A Report of the Surgeon General* and other related information are available on the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's web site: Health care providers, people who smoke, and anyone who would like more information should contact the Utah Tobacco Free Resource Line at 1-877-220-3466.

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