

The Benefits of Smokefree Buildings: Why a Smokefree Policy is a Good Decision for Multiunit Housing Providers

A smokefree building is a sound business decision. As a property owner, building manager, home owners' association, or condominium association, you have invested a lot of time, money, and hard work into your property. Making your properties smokefree can reduce your costs, risk, and liability, and it's attractive to residents.

Learn why you should get on board with the nationwide trend for housing providers to go smokefree.



Smokefree Policies Are Legal!

Property owners and managers can legally adopt smokefree policies for all types of housing! Whether you own or manage market-rate, affordable, or public housing, you can make your buildings smokefree.

You can adopt a smokefree policy in the same manner that you adopt other rules to regulate activities that present a risk to the building or impact other residents, such as rules that address pets or loud music.

Smokefree policies are not discriminatory. There is no constitutional right to smoke and people who smoke are not a protected class.¹

Smokefree building policies can limit your liability as a property owner or manager. Residents with health issues that are caused by or exacerbated by exposure to secondhand smoke may pursue legal action against property owners or managers if appropriate steps are not taken to resolve the problem.²

A smokefree building does not mean that people who smoke cannot live in the building, or that people who smoke must quit. It simply means that people cannot smoke inside the building or in other areas specified in the policy, such as on balconies and patios.

Resources are available from ANR Foundation at <https://no-smoke.org/at-risk-places/homes/> or by calling 510-841-3032.

Smoking In Your Building Is Expensive...

Reduce the cleaning and maintenance costs—and extra turn-over time—that comes with renovating a smoke-damaged unit after a resident who smokes has moved out.

A recent study found that costs in properties that allow smoking everywhere were nearly double that of smoking-related costs incurred at smokefree properties.³

Compared to smokefree units, cleaning and refurbishing costs can be up to \$3,000 more in units with heavy smoking.⁴

Maintenance and refurbishing expenses are not the only costs associated with allowing smoking in your building. Nationally, fires caused by cigarette smoking result in over \$300 million in property loss each year.⁵

Some property insurance companies offer a discount for buildings that have a smokefree policy. Ask your insurance carrier if you could qualify for a reduced rate if your building goes smokefree.

...and Dangerous!

Allowing smoking in your building can increase the risk of fire. An estimated 7,600 smoking-related fires occur in residential buildings each year in the US.⁶

Fires caused by smoking are the leading cause of residential fire deaths in the U.S., accounting for 14% of fire deaths in residential buildings.⁷

People who smoke are not the only victims of smoking-related fires. One in four casualties of smoking-related fires are the children, friends, and neighbors of the smoker who caused the fire.⁸

Secondhand Smoke Can Transfer In Buildings

Secondhand smoke can drift through buildings and enter common areas and units occupied by non-smokers through vents, doors, windows, hallways, electrical outlets, and through gaps around fixtures and walls.⁹

If smoking is allowed in your building, even in only a few units, residents and staff can be unwillingly exposed to secondhand smoke.

According to the U.S. Surgeon General, there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke, and eliminating indoor smoking is the only way to protect non-smokers from the harmful effects of secondhand smoke exposure.¹⁰

Among the 62.7 million multiunit housing residents in the U.S. who do not allow smoking in their home, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that 44% to 46.2% of them are involuntarily exposed to secondhand smoke in their unit.¹¹

A recent national study found that 44% of multiunit housing residents who do not allow smoking in their home have experienced secondhand smoke drifting into their unit from elsewhere in or around their building in the last year, with 31% reporting that drifting smoke occurred “most of the time” or “often.”¹²

Retain Your Current Residents

Residents want smokefree housing policies. A 2012 study found that approximately 56% of multiunit housing residents around the U.S. would support the implementation of a smokefree policy for their building.¹³

More than 55% of New York State multiunit residents support a policy that prohibits smoking in all areas of their building. Support was higher among minorities and people with children.¹⁴

Over 90% of Fort Collins, CO and approximately 80% of Charleston, SC apartment residents currently residing in smoking-allowable buildings indicated that they would not move out of their current residence if it were designated as smokefree.^{15,16}

In fact, many of these residents indicated that they would be willing to give up other amenities in order to live in a smokefree building, such as a shorter commute time to work and other local services.^{17,18}

Smokefree building policies can appeal to your current residents as well as new potential residents in your market. Non-smokers are the majority in every state.¹⁹ Additionally, surveys show that many smokers already choose not to smoke inside, in order to protect the health of their families and to prevent damage to their belongings.²⁰

Attract New Residents

People increasingly want their living environment to be smokefree to protect their health, and are looking for smokefree housing options. Secondhand smoke is a cause of heart disease, heart attacks, asthma and other respiratory ailments, SIDS, lung cancer, and many other illnesses.²¹

A recent national survey found that nearly 30% of multiunit housing residents live in smokefree buildings. However, 56% would support a smokefree policy for their building.²² This indicates that there is more demand for smokefree housing than supply.

A Minnesota study found that 54% of multiunit residents would be very likely to choose a smoke-free building, all other things being equal, and 34% would be willing to pay more to live in one.²³

65% of Charleston, SC apartment residents would prefer to have a policy in their building that prohibited smoking in all indoor areas. However, only 9% of apartment residents in this survey reported living in a smokefree building.²⁴

High support for smokefree building policies along with the low prevalence of current smokefree policies could result in a large market opportunity for multiunit housing operators who implement smokefree policies in your area.

You have the opportunity to attract residents by promoting your smokefree policy as an amenity. Advertise your smokefree status in rental listings and on promotional materials.

More information is available on our homes page at <https://no-smoke.org/at-risk-places/homes/> or by calling 510-841-3032.

¹ Graff, S.K. Tobacco Control Legal Consortium, *There is No Constitutional Right to Smoke: 2008*. 2nd edition, 2008. <http://www.publichealthlawcenter.org/sites/default/files/resources/tclc-syn-constitution-2008.pdf>

² Smoke-Free Environments Law Project. <http://www.tcsg.org/sfelp/home.htm>.

³ Ong, M.K.; et al, "Estimates of smoking-related property costs in California multiunit housing," *American Journal of Public Health* 102(3): 490-493, March 2012.

<http://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/abs/10.2105/AJPH.2011.300170>

⁴ National Center for Healthy Housing. *Reasons to Explore Smoke-Free Housing*. October 15, 2009.

https://nchh.org/resource/fact-sheet_green-and-hh_reasons-to-explore-smoke-free-housing/

⁵ US Fire Administration. *Smoking-related fires in residential buildings (2008-2010)*, Volume 13, Issue 6, June 2012. <https://www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/statistics/v13i6.pdf>.

⁶ *ibid*

⁷ *ibid*

⁸ *ibid*

⁹ Repace, J. "Secondhand Smoke Infiltration in Apartments." 2011.

http://www.repace.com/pdf/REPACE_Recent%20Advances_ISES%202011.pdf

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke: A Report of the Surgeon General*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for

Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2006. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK44324/>.

¹¹ King, B.A.; et al, "National and state estimates of secondhand smoke infiltration among U.S. multiunit housing residents," *Nicotine and Tobacco Research* 15(7):1316-1321, July 2013.

<https://academic.oup.com/ntr/article/15/7/1316/1375748>

¹² Licht, A.S.; et al, "[Attitudes, experiences, and acceptance of smoke-free policies among US multiunit housing residents](#)," *American Journal of Public Health* 102(10): 1868-1871, October 2012.

¹³ *ibid*

¹⁴ King, B.A.; et al, "Multiunit housing residents' experiences and attitudes toward smoke-free policies," *Nicotine and Tobacco Research* 6(1): 598-605, June 2010. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/?term=22897557>

¹⁵ Roswell Park Cancer Institute. Preferences and practices regarding secondhand smoke exposure and smoke-free policies in multiunit housing: A survey of multiunit housing residents living in Fort Collins, Colorado, 2012.

¹⁶ Roswell Park Cancer Institute. Preferences and practices regarding secondhand smoke exposure and smoke-free policies in multiunit housing: A survey of multiunit housing residents living in Charleston, South Carolina, 2012.

¹⁷ Roswell Park Cancer Institute. Fort Collins, Colorado, 2012.

¹⁸ Roswell Park Cancer Institute. Charleston, South Carolina, 2012.

¹⁹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Tobacco Control State Highlights 2012.

https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/state_data/state_highlights/2012/pdfs/cover.pdf

²⁰ California: (find Adult Tobacco Use Survey) and Oregon: Campbell DeLong Resources, Inc. "Smoking practices, Policies, and Preferences in Oregon Rental Housing 2008." Tobacco Prevention and Education Program, Oregon Public Health Division. 2008. <http://www.smokefreehousinginfo.com/pdfs-docs/OregonStatewideRenterSurvey.pdf>

²¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke: A Report of the Surgeon General*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2006. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK44324/>.

²² Licht, October 2012.

²³ Hewett, M.J.; et al, "Secondhand smoke in apartment buildings: renter and owner or manager perspectives," *Nicotine & Tobacco Research* 9(S1): S39-S47, January 2007. https://academic.oup.com/ntr/article-abstract/9/Suppl_1/S39/1138713

²⁴ Roswell Park Cancer Institute. Charleston, South Carolina, 2012.

May be reprinted with appropriate credit to the American Nonsmokers' Rights Foundation.

© Copyright 2019 American Nonsmokers' Rights Foundation. All rights reserved.