



“Smoke-free apartment communities not only promote a healthy resident population, but also a healthy bottom-line for owners and investors.”

Dave Watkins

*Chairman of the Board of
the National Apartment
Association*

The Benefits of a Smokefree Multi-unit Housing Policy

Multi-unit housing owners, managers, and residents all benefit from a smokefree policy. Smokefree buildings are more cost-effective, safe, and healthy. Whether you own a duplex and rent out the second unit, manage a six-building condominium complex, or are a property management firm with apartment buildings in multiple states, secondhand smoke exposure is an issue you are probably confronting or will need to address in the near future.

Market advantages: Buildings may be able to attract more tenants by going smokefree. Research shows that renters want smokefree housing. Many renters are even willing to pay more and make other sacrifices, such as walking farther to a bus stop or driving farther to work, to live in a smokefree building.

Reduced costs: Cleaning costs are lower when you don't have to scrub, paint, and replace items in an apartment that smell like smoke or are covered in residue.

Protection from secondhand smoke: All tenants, guests, and staff members are protected from the serious health dangers associated with secondhand smoke exposure.

Smokefree policies are legal: A building owner/manager can legally make a rental building (or entire property) completely smokefree.

Market Advantages

Landlords, management companies, property owners, condominium associations and public housing authorities are all hearing from tenants who are bothered by and/or suffer health consequences from exposure to secondhand tobacco smoke, when smoke that drifts into their unit from a unit occupied by a person who smokes. In response, they are increasingly choosing to adopt non-smoking policies for their buildings and facilities, which protect both the health of tenants and the financial health of owners.

The December 2007 issue of UNITS magazine, published by the National Apartment Association, has a cover/feature set of articles which can be accessed online (at <http://www.tcsg.org/sfelp/UnitsDec2007.pdf>) titled Clearing the Air: Industry Discusses Trend Toward Smoke-Free Housing. This set of articles explains why it makes good business sense to adopt a smokefree policy.

Reduced Costs

Apartment turnover costs can be two to seven times greater when smoking is allowed compared to the cost of maintaining and turning over a smokefree unit. Tobacco smoke leaves sticky residue on walls, curtains, cabinets, blinds, appliances, fixtures, and ceilings. The odor and toxins often stay in carpets, curtains, and walls. Dropped ashes may result in burn damage to tiles, carpets, countertops, and bathtubs.

As Public Housing Authorities and apartment landlords know all too well, the ongoing costs of properly cleaning rental units in order to rid the dwelling of the toxins from tobacco smoke for new tenants serve as a strong financial motivation to going smokefree.

Protection from Secondhand Smoke

Secondhand smoke (smoke caused by someone else's lighted tobacco product) is dangerous and deadly. The 2006 Surgeon General's Report, *The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke* (available at <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/secondhandsmoke/>) concluded that there is no risk-free level of secondhand smoke and the only way to protect people from the dangers of secondhand smoke is to eliminate the smoke exposure. As many as 175 Montanans die annually from exposure to secondhand tobacco smoke. Secondhand smoke has been linked to diseases such as cancer, asthma, heart disease, respiratory illness, ear infections, and low birth weight. Smokefree housing allows tenants to enjoy their home without being exposed to the deadly chemicals found in secondhand smoke.

Smokefree Policies are Legal

There is currently no Montana law or federal law that prohibits a landlord from making an entire apartment building smokefree. Smokefree policies are not discriminatory and may actually protect landlords from the risk of some legal violations such as warranty of habitability or covenant of quiet enjoyment. Tenants with disabilities caused by or made worse by secondhand smoke may also have legal protections under the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Federal Fair Housing Act.

Smokefree policies are largely self enforcing. Because tenants expect and tend to prefer a smokefree environment, they will abide by the policy. Guardian Management, a group managing over 12,000 smokefree units nationwide, recently released survey results showing that more than 75% of their residents are "happy" with the smokefree policy.



Center for Energy and Environment, "Survey of Minnesota Renters Regarding Secondhand Smoke Movement in Apartment Buildings and Interest in Smoke-Free Buildings," 2001, <http://www.mncee.org/research/index.php>.

Smoke-Free Housing Project (Oregon), A program of the American Lung Association of Oregon, 2007, <http://www.smokefreeoregon.com/housing>.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Surgeon Generals Office, *The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke: A Report of the Surgeon General*, 2006, <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/secondhandsmoke/>.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Smoking-Attributable Mortality, Morbidity, and Economic Costs (SAMMEC)," Adult SAMMEC and Maternal and Child Health (MCH) SAMMEC Software, 2007, " <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/sammeec/>.