



How Community Leaders Can Work Toward Smoke-Free Multi-Housing

Community leaders and organizations play crucial roles in the development of new housing. They may provide funding for new or renovated buildings, approve plans for housing construction, or identify needs for particular types of housing. One of the needs seldom addressed is for smoke-free multi-housing units.

The movement of tobacco smoke from one unit to another is very common. Few renters are protected from secondhand smoke movement and the health effects associated with secondhand smoke exposure. Almost 50% of Minnesota renters report that smoke comes into their apartment unit from somewhere else in the building.¹ Half of Minnesota renters surveyed said they were extremely or very interested in living in a smoke-free building.¹



What Does Smoke-Free Housing Mean for Neighborhoods?

- **A Child-Friendly Neighborhood.** Children are particularly vulnerable to the health effects of secondhand smoke. Exposure to secondhand smoke can cause asthma in susceptible children and is one of the major triggers for children who already have asthma. Secondhand smoke can also cause or worsen conditions such as bronchitis, pneumonia, low birth weight, and ear infections. In 2003, almost 60,000 Minnesota children were treated for conditions caused by secondhand smoke.²
- **A Healthier Neighborhood.** Research shows that living in a household with a no-smoking policy encourages residents to reduce the amount they smoke or simply to quit. Any reduction in smoking reduces the harmful effects of secondhand smoke, whose victims are disproportionately among low-income groups.
- **A Safer Neighborhood.** Cigarettes and other smoking materials are the leading cause of residential fire deaths in Minnesota and the United States. These fires can result in millions of dollars in damaged property and healthcare costs. According to the U.S. Fire Administration, more attention needs to be given to preventing fires caused by lighted tobacco materials.³
- **Safeguarded Investments.** Cigarette burns on counters and carpets are eliminated with a smoke-free policy. Tar residue that collects on windows, blinds, and walls is also eliminated. Cleaning a smoke-free unit is less expensive than cleaning one in which someone has smoked.
- **Social Justice.** People who own single-family homes can readily protect themselves from secondhand smoke. Renters comprise roughly 25% of Minnesota households⁴ and disproportionately include minorities, people with low-incomes, and young adults. Without smoke-free policies, these populations cannot protect themselves from unwanted secondhand smoke coming into their homes.

What Can Community Leaders do to Promote Smoke-Free Housing?

- Insist that new rental multi-housing developments in your neighborhood include smoke-free buildings.
- Convert buildings owned by your community organization to smoke-free buildings.
- Educate funders, policy makers, landlords, and others in your community about the issue and the benefits of eliminating smoking in apartment buildings.



Free Resources are Available from Live Smoke Free

- Live Smoke Free staff are available to give presentations to anyone interested in smoke-free housing.
- Steps to adopting a smoke-free policy, including a model lease addendum, are available by phone or online.
- Smoke-free buildings can receive free signs, advertising strategies, and a listing on Live Smoke Free's online housing directory.

¹Center for Energy and Environment. "Survey of Minnesota Renters Regarding Secondhand Smoke Movement in Apartment Buildings and Interest in Smoke-Free Buildings." 2001.

²BlueCross BlueShield of Minnesota. "Health Care Costs and Secondhand Smoke: The Bottom Line." 2007.

³U.S. Fire Administration. "Residential Smoking Fires and Casualties." 2005.

⁴U.S. Census. 2000.