

Restoring a Smoke-Damaged Apartment

Property owners/managers: Curious about what to clean, restore, and replace when converting to a non-smoking unit?

Residents: Wondering what to ask your landlord to clean or replace when moving into a unit that has been smoked in?

According to Kennedy Restoration Co. (Portland, OR), the following items in a smoke-damaged apartment will need to be cleaned, restored, or replaced. Individual units may vary, but a thorough restoration of a 2-bedroom apartment could cost up to \$15,000.

“But once the home is cleaned and restored, keeping it smokefree leads to many benefits for the property manager and the owner. We have seen more timely lease-ups, which leads to increased rents and a very satisfied client. It is definitely worth the time, investment and commitment.”

~Barb Casey, Marketing Director, Kennedy Restoration

Restoration Checklist

Clean (& replace if needed):

Floors
Baseboards & trim
Walls
Ceiling
Doors & door openings
Door chime
Shelving
Closet organizers & rods
Cabinetry-inside & out
Countertops
Ceramic tile
Outlets & switches
Light fixtures
Window units, frames, & sills
Range & hood
Refrigerator
Dishwasher
Sinks
Toilets
Bathtubs & showers
Vanity
Mirrors
Blinds
Exhaust Fans
Ceiling Fans

Seal (1 coat) & Paint (2 coats)

Baseboards & trim
Doors & door openings
Window frames & sills
Shelving
Vanity
Cabinetry
Floor underlayment (seal for odor control)

Remove and Replace

Carpet
Carpet pad
Curtains
Vinyl
Smoke or burn-damaged countertops, linoleum, furnishings, etc.

Other

Prepping & masking for painting
Ozone treatment
Thermal fogging
Floor protection (plastic film)

Restoration Process

Step 1

It takes approximately four days and a team of three cleaning experts to clean a unit of this size. These four days includes a complete cleaning from ceiling to floor and includes cabinets, bathrooms and other rooms. This can be referred to as basic overall cleaning. When dealing with tobacco smoke, there are several additional detailed cleaning steps and all require an additional charge. The detailed cleaning list includes appliances, bath and lighting fixtures, tub surrounds, bath vanities and door and window openings, which include woodwork, frame and window glass.

Carpet has to be removed and replaced. If there is a sub-floor it has to be cleaned, sanitized/deodorized and sealed with "Kilz" or "Bulls-eye" primer.

If floors are yellow/brown from tobacco, they have to be removed and replaced.

If appliances are porcelain, they can be cleaned; if appliances are vinyl, they have to be removed and replaced.

The contractor should communicate all these steps to the on-site manager, the property Management Company and/or the owner.

Step 2

The next step is the ozone and thermal fogging process. For these purposes, a portable ozone machine would probably be used for 24 - 48 hours, depending on the complexity of the odor. A thermal fogger would also be used in conjunction with the ozone or separately, again depending on the situation. The ozone machine attacks the smoke molecules and the fogger is used to penetrate those surfaces that are not easily reached i.e. behind trims, etc. In some circumstances, if fixtures are too yellowed and odiferous, they may have to be removed and replaced. If the odor has permeated ceiling fans and cabinets, those items may also have to be removed and replaced.

Step 3

The next step is the sealant process. Clear coat sealant if applied to cabinetry and doors if these items still retain the smoke odor. Smoke will penetrate porous materials like doors and cabinets, but laminate is non-porous so it can usually be cleaned.

"Kilz" or "Bulls-eye" primers are then used to seal all the cleaned areas (as outlined in Step 1). If the smoke odor is not cleaned thoroughly, the sealant process is not helpful, as smoke will "bleed" through the sealant.

Step 4

This step is to paint the entire apartment and the woodwork, replace carpet and pad, any appliances, any flooring and any doors that weren't able to be clear coated.

Of course, there must be pictures and documentation during the entire cleaning process.