

For landlords: Why go smoke-free

Cost savings

Management and maintenance expenses, like cleaning and repair, are much higher when a tenant has been smoking inside an apartment.

- Turnover costs for units that have been smoked in can be several thousand dollars higher, on average, than turnover for non-smoking units
- Compared to non-smoking units, units that were smoked in can cost 2-7 times more to repair and maintain

Some insurance companies even offer discounts on insurance for 100% smoke-free buildings. Ask your insurance carrier for more information.

Protecting a property investment

A smoke-free property means units don't have damage from smoke. Avoiding damage protects your building and makes it easier to maintain.

Lower risk of legal liability

Massachusetts law recognizes tenants' rights to safe and livable housing. Courts have ruled that this includes tenants' right to be protected from secondhand smoke in their housing.

Making a residential building smoke-free reduces requests for reasonable accommodation due to secondhand smoke exposure. It also lowers the risk of lawsuits from tenants and staff who have had problems because of secondhand smoke.

Attracting and keeping tenants

Studies show high demand for smoke-free housing in Massachusetts. Smoke-free housing can reduce tenant turnover and increase tenant satisfaction. A survey of Massachusetts tenants found that 92.4% thought a smoke-free policy was a good decision once the policy was in effect.

Market trends

The housing market in Boston and across the country has increasingly been shifting to smoke-free, from small landlords to large multi-state management companies. Ninety-nine percent of property owners who made their buildings smoke-free thought they made a good decision, one survey of Massachusetts landlords found.

Fire safety

Smoking in the home is a leading cause of residential fires and fatal residential fires in the U.S. The risks are even higher in buildings with large numbers of elderly or disabled residents who may have mobility issues that will not allow them to escape from a fire.

Residents who use home oxygen, which is highly flammable, are at serious risk from smoking or being near smoking because oxygen can explode, even when it is off, if a fire or spark is nearby.

Fires caused by smoking also cause more property damage than other types of residential fires. Smoking-related property damage averages \$25,820-\$27,600 nationally.

Secondhand smoke and health

Cigarette smoke inside a building travels to other apartments or units and affects other tenants.

Smoke moves through ventilation and heating systems, cracks and openings in lighting and plumbing fixtures, electrical outlets, and under doors. The toxic gases and particles from secondhand smoke can't be removed by ventilation systems or opening windows.

Secondhand smoke is dangerous to everyone's health:

- Secondhand smoke has 250 toxic gases and tiny particles, including 70 known to cause cancer
- The U.S. Surgeon General ruled there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke

Repeated exposure to secondhand smoke causes greater health risks, including:

- Asthma
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- Heart attacks
- Stroke

Most people spend more time at home than at work or school—close to 15 hours a day on average. Children, the elderly, and people with disabilities—groups with the most critical health risks—may spend even more time at home, resulting in even more exposure.

Free resources and help

If you are thinking about or planning to make your property smoke-free, the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) can help. BPHC offers free help and support with smoke-free housing, including:

- Answering questions and troubleshooting by phone any issues related to smoke-free housing
- Conducting trainings for building staff
- Attending resident meetings and speaking about health consequences of secondhand smoke exposure and resources for quitting smoking
- Providing sample materials like smoke-free lease addendums, resident notices and surveys, smoke-free building signs, and resources for quitting smoking

More information and help making your property smoke-free

Get our free landlord guide at www.BostonSmokeFreeHomes.org

Or contact us at:

- HealthyHomes@bphc.org
- 617-534-4718