

An Apartment Manager's Guide

to adopting a smoke-free building policy



www.Smoke-FreeHomes.iowa.gov



Free Resources from Smoke-Free Homes

- On-site consultations with local experts on smoke-free housing
- Listing on online directory of smoke-free apartment buildings
- Policy creation and implementation checklist
- Model addendum to incorporate into your current lease
- Sample letters to inform tenants and create buy-in
- Strategies for advertising your smoke-free building
- Signs and window clings for buildings and grounds

What is “Smoke-Free Homes?”

Not many things in this world are truly “win-win” scenarios. The idea of adopting a smoke-free policy, however, has benefits for everyone involved. Iowa’s Smoke-Free Homes project can help you create and implement a smoke-free policy for your multi-unit housing that both protects the health of your tenants and improves your company’s bottom line.

Smoke-Free Homes is a free program provided by the Iowa Department of Public Health. When you work with Smoke-Free Homes to make your buildings 100% smoke-free, you’ll have happier tenants, lower cleaning costs, shorter turnover time, and decreased insurance premiums. And we’ll achieve our mission of promoting and protecting the health of Iowans.

Smoke-Free Homes also provides education to current and prospective renters, local policy makers, and housing industry professionals about the benefits of smoke-free buildings. Learn more at www.Smoke-FreeHomes.Iowa.gov.

Are you ready?

“I’d like to learn more.”


The best place to begin is by calling one of our helpful local experts on smoke-free housing. Please see the contact information on the back cover of this guide or visit www.Smoke-FreeHomes.Iowa.gov. Everything is free.

“I’m considering the next step.”

It’s easy with Smoke-Free Homes. We’ll work with you step-by-step to help you adopt and implement your smoke-free policy. From creating the lease addendum to educating your tenants, we can help.

“I have a smoke-free policy in place.”

Great! Let us know about it. Call us for your free signage and resources for promoting your policy to tenants and the public. We will also add your property to the Iowa Smoke-Free Housing Registry, which is used by potential tenants seeking smoke-free options.



More than 82% of surveyed renters in Iowa already know that exposure to secondhand smoke presents a serious health risk.

“We noticed tenants were moving out due to secondhand smoke infiltrating into their apartments. Going smoke free was an easy decision and an easy process.”

– Holly Frette, Metropolitan Properties Leasing Agent for eight apartment buildings in Des Moines.

Healthier Buildings

Tenants Know about Secondhand Smoke

More than 82 percent of surveyed renters in Iowa already know that exposure to secondhand smoke presents a serious health risk. Also, nearly 27 percent indicate that they are always or sometimes bothered by secondhand smoke that enters their apartment.¹ In other words, there's a problem and your tenants know it.

Secondhand Smoke Kills

Each year, secondhand smoke results in at least 46,000 coronary heart disease deaths and at least 3,400 lung cancer deaths.² In Iowa, 231,000 children are exposed to secondhand smoke at home.³ Every year, between 150,000 and 300,000 children under 18 months of age get bronchitis or pneumonia from breathing secondhand tobacco smoke, resulting in thousands of hospitalizations.⁴

Secondhand Smoke is Toxic

Secondhand smoke contains more than 4,000 chemicals. Of these chemicals, at least 250 are known toxins, and more than 50 can cause cancer. The U.S. surgeon general has concluded that there is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke, and that the only way to protect people from the dangers of secondhand smoke is to eliminate the smoke exposure.⁵

Some of the Chemicals in Secondhand Smoke⁴ (and other products they are found in)

Chemical	Other Product
Formaldehyde	Embalming fluid
Benzene	Gasoline
Polonium-210	Spark plugs
Vinyl Chloride	Metal pipes
Carbon Monoxide	Car exhaust
Ammonia	Household cleaners

Chemical	Other Product
Arsenic	Pesticides
Chromium	Steel
Lead	Old paint
Cadmium	Batteries
Butane	Lighter fluid
Toluene	Paint thinners



Secondhand smoke cannot be completely controlled by ventilation or air purifiers. A smoke-free policy is the only way to eliminate secondhand smoke exposure and protect the health of your tenants.

Indoor Air Quality

Even “Sealed Units” Will Leak

Research shows that air flows between units in apartment buildings.⁶ It is virtually impossible to eliminate secondhand smoke from entering, even if steps are taken to “seal” problem areas.

At around \$700 per unit, that’s like money flying out the window.⁶ The only way to eliminate exposure to secondhand smoke is with a smoke-free policy.

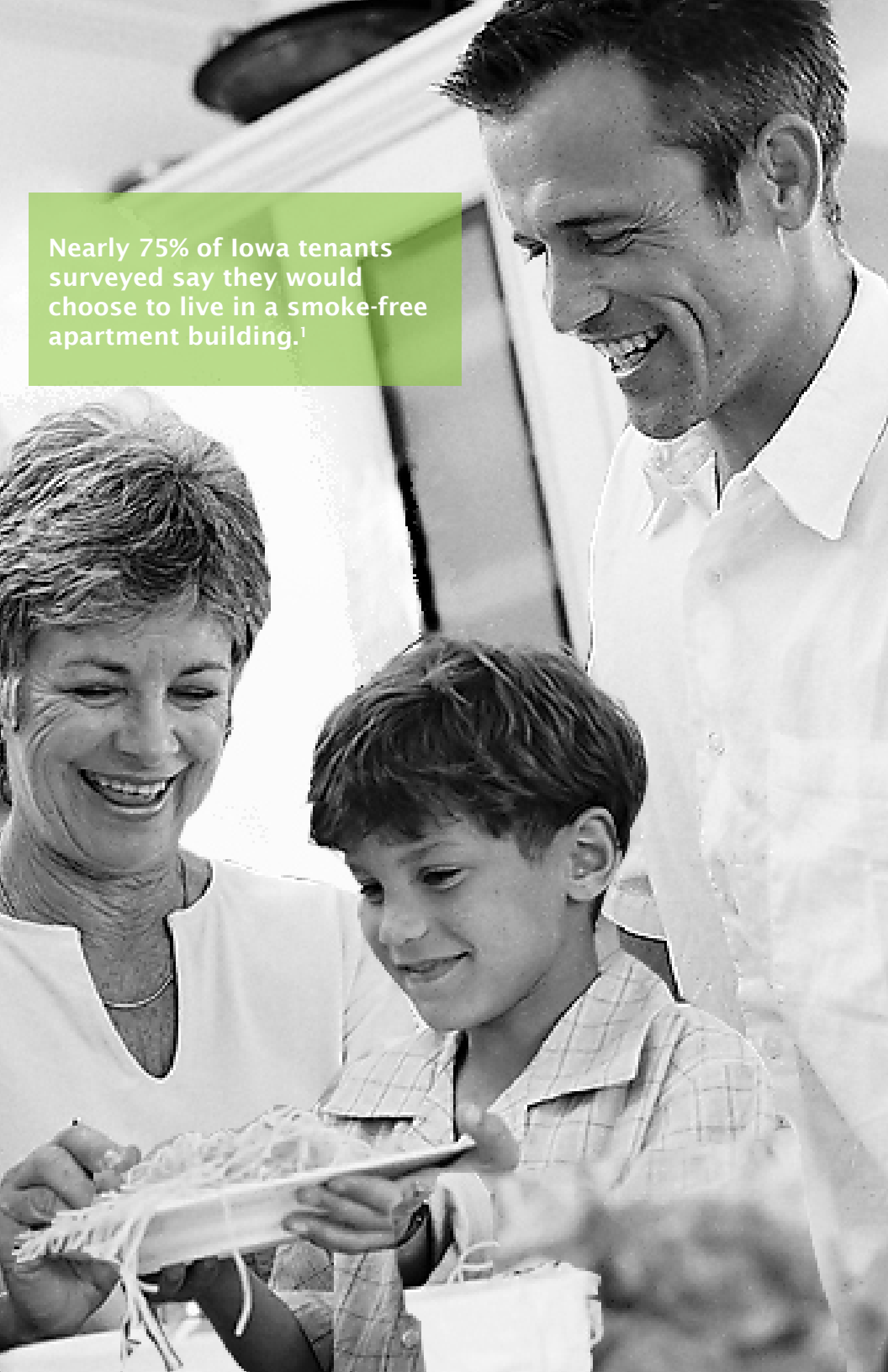
Ventilation and Air Purifiers Don’t Work

In 2008, the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating & Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) released a position document on secondhand smoke. They concluded that, “the only means of effectively eliminating health risk associated with indoor exposure is to ban smoking activity.”⁷

Engineering approaches such as air fresheners, cleaners, and purifiers have not proven to be effective, and ASHRAE cautions against their use to control secondhand smoke.

The Surgeon General Agrees

The *Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke* report by the U.S. Surgeon General concludes that eliminating smoking indoors is the only way to fully protect people from the dangers of secondhand smoke. In fact, the report states that ventilation systems can actually make things worse by distributing secondhand smoke throughout a building.⁵



Nearly 75% of Iowa tenants surveyed say they would choose to live in a smoke-free apartment building.¹

Tenant Preferences

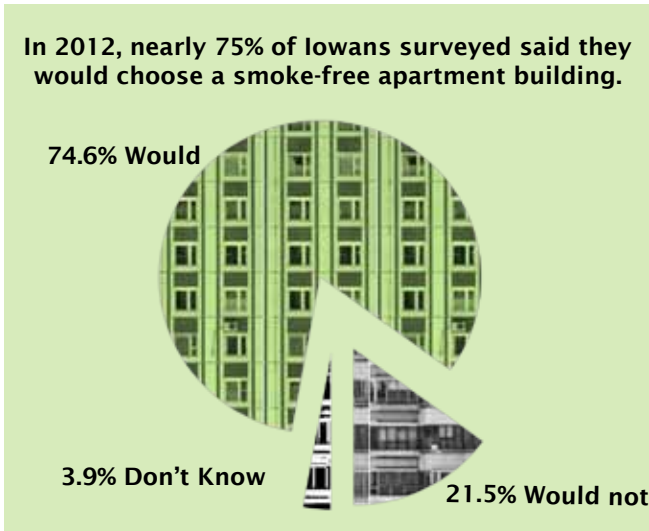
Most Iowans Don't Smoke

In Iowa, only 16.1% of adults are smokers.⁸ Also, more than 79% of Iowans already have rules against smoking in their homes.⁹

Even though most Iowans prohibit smoking in their homes, residents in multi-family buildings cannot control the secondhand smoke caused by their neighbors. Unfortunately for them, only about one third of Iowa renters surveyed indicated that smoking was prohibited within all building units, garages, and most outdoor spaces on their rental property.¹

Iowans Prefer Smoke-Free Housing

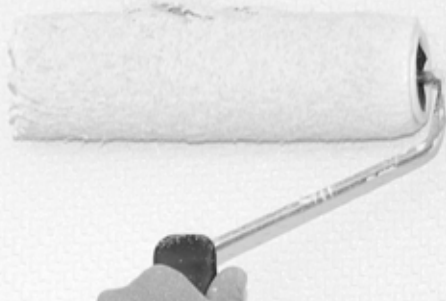
According to a 2012 study, nearly 75% of Iowans surveyed said they would choose a smoke-free apartment building. In addition, 46% of all respondents said they would not be interested in living in an apartment building where smoking was allowed. Even among smokers, 44% indicated they would not be interested in living in an apartment building that wasn't smoke free.¹



Tenants Value Clean Air

A good way to gauge interest in an idea is to ask people to assign a value to it. When Iowans were asked whether they would be willing to pay a higher rent to live in a non-smoking building, 34 percent said they would. Among those persons who said they would pay more, nearly 40 percent said they would pay between \$26 and \$50 more each month.¹

It costs 2 to 3 times more to clean a unit that has been smoked in compared to one that has not.



“Now that we’re completely smoke free, we have reduced our damages and turnover expenses when a smoker moves out by \$400 to \$1,200 per unit. Also, we expect our insurance premiums to decrease 10% to 15%.”

– Keith Denner, Manager of Sun Prairie and Vista Court Apartments, Iowa’s largest apartment complex.

Protect Your Investment

Lower Your Cleaning and Renovation Costs

Building owners and managers typically spend 2 to 3 times more money to clean and renovate units in which a smoker has lived. The nicotine and other chemicals contained in the smoke leaves sticky particles, residue, and stains on walls, curtains, cabinets, blinds, appliances, and fixtures. Dropped cigarettes and ashes can leave burn damage on tiles, carpets, curtains, countertops, and bathtubs. Smoke odors can remain in carpets, curtains, and walls for a very long time. All this means longer turnover time and increased costs.

Many residents may decide not to rent an apartment if it has been smoked in. A smoky smell and residue is very difficult for a resident to eliminate on their own. Rather than risk feeling ill and having their clothing and furniture absorb the smoke smell, they may decide to look for somewhere else to live.

Reduce Your Risk of Fire Damage

Cigarette-caused fires often result when a smoker drops or improperly disposes of a lit cigarette. A dropped cigarette can lie in furniture or bed linens and smolder for up to 30 to 45 minutes, eventually causing a fire or large amounts of smoke.¹⁰

Cigarettes and other smoking materials are the leading cause of residential fire deaths in the United States.¹¹ Smoke-free policies in apartments reduce the risk of cigarette-related fires, damages, injuries, and deaths by eliminating lighted smoking materials from the interior of the building.

Save on Insurance

Since insurance premiums are affected by claims, it only takes one fire for your monthly insurance expenditures to go up, not to mention the deductible from the fire itself. Reduced claims can result in dramatic savings over time.



“I am very pleased with our decision to go non-smoking. It was very well received by our tenants. Some residents have vacated, but more have chosen Sun Prairie because of our new smoke-free policy. Also, the total complaints have been fewer than what we had formerly from people being bothered by smoking.”

– Keith Denner, Manager of Sun Prairie and Vista Court Apartments, Iowa’s largest apartment complex.

Policies Protect Everyone's Rights

Smoke-free Policies for Individual Units

There is no state statute that prohibits smoking in individual apartment units. There is also no state law that prohibits landlords from making an entire apartment building smoke free. You have every right to do so.

The Iowa Smokefree Air Act (SFAA) prohibits smoking in enclosed common areas of multi-unit residential buildings, such as hallways, lobbies, stairwells, laundry facilities, and management offices. For more information, visit www.iowasmokefreeair.gov.

Liability Issues

Tenants could bring legal actions against a landlord for a breach of the warranty of habitability or the covenant of quiet enjoyment, trespass, or nuisance, resulting in rent abatement or judicial termination of leases. While legal cases are rare, there is a growing likelihood of suits if the landlord knows the dangers of secondhand smoke and does not act to reduce exposure.¹²

Tenants with disabilities made worse by being exposed to their neighbors' secondhand smoke may seek legal action under the Americans with Disabilities Act or the Federal Fair Housing Act. This may require making reasonable accommodations in their housing situation, including developing or enforcing a smoke-free policy.¹²

Concerns about Discrimination

Smoking is not a protected activity or right. An individual's status as a smoker is not a protected category or recognized disability.¹³ A smart decision is to implement a policy based on the activity of smoking and not an individual's status as a smoker. Smoke-Free Homes has a sample policy addendum that can help you.



Two Types of Implementation Strategies

The “phase-in” method works by having new tenants sign a smoke-free lease addendum or policy immediately. For current tenants, announce the policy change and have them sign a smoke-free lease addendum or policy at the time of their lease renewal. Before long, your entire building will be smoke free.

The “quit-date” method allows you to set a date for the building to go smoke free. Give your tenants notice of the policy change and ensure they sign a smoke-free lease addendum prior to implementation.

Remember to notify your tenants about the policy change in a reasonable period of time. Depending on your building’s situation, reasonable notice could be 30-60 days.

Policy Considerations

Consider the Scope

Individual units

Covering all individual units is the cornerstone of an effective smoke-free policy. This is your greatest tool for protecting the health of your residents and improving your bottom line.

Common areas

The Smokefree Air Act prohibits smoking in all enclosed spaces, including common areas of multi-unit residential buildings, such as hallways, lobbies, stairwells, laundry facilities, and management offices.

Outdoor areas

Prohibiting smoking anywhere on your property is the best way to protect the health of your residents while maximizing cost savings, including the expense of dealing with discarded cigarette butts. Any designated smoking areas should be a considerable distance from entrances, windows, patios, balconies, and ventilation intakes. This will help prevent fires and smoke infiltration. If you allow smoking anywhere outdoors, remember the rules for “enclosed spaces” established in the Smokefree Air Act.

Consider the Timing

Are you planning for new construction?

Have all new tenants sign a smoke-free lease addendum or policy with the primary lease agreement.

Are you renovating your building or purchasing an older building?

Give your tenants ample notice (30 to 60 days) of the change and ensure that everyone has signed the lease addendum prior to the date your policy will go into effect.

Are you adopting a policy with no changes to your building's construction?

Make the effective date of your policy coincide with the majority of your lease renewals and include the policy in the new lease. In the meantime, have new tenants sign a smoke-free lease addendum.



“I was reluctant at first, but our local Smoke-Free Homes contact helped me understand the benefits of this new policy. Alicia just took the fear away. And she even provided me with signage so I could advertise the fact that our apartments are smoke free. By far, this is one of the most positive things we’ve ever done.”

– Mary Koepke, Manager of the 132-unit Ridge Oaks Apartment Complex in Sioux City.

Policy Implementation

Five Easy Steps and Support from Smoke-Free Homes

1. Inform your tenants that you are considering adopting a smoke-free policy. Create a survey or tenant meetings to present your thoughts and gather feedback. A **sample survey** is available from Smoke-Free Homes. Also, our local representative will be happy to attend your tenant meeting.
2. Decide whether to use the “phase-in” or the “quit-date” implementation method. Decide on a date for going completely smoke free. Notify tenants 30 to 60 days in advance. A **sample letter** is available from Smoke-Free Homes.
3. Renew existing leases and initiate all new leases with a smoke-free lease addendum or policy. A **sample lease addendum** and policy language are available from Smoke-Free Homes.
4. Post signs on your property to remind everyone of the new policy. **Free signs** and window clings are available from Smoke-Free Homes.
5. Advertise that you have a smoke-free building. Ask Smoke-Free Homes to add your property to the **free Iowa Smoke-Free Housing Registry**.

A Note about HUD

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) strongly encourages all public housing authorities to adopt smoke-free policies for their buildings.¹⁴ HUD does not have any policies restricting landlords from adopting smoke-free policies or requiring grandfathering of tenants.

The requirements for implementing a smoke-free policy in subsidized housing vary depending on the type of subsidy or assistance the property receives. For example, some properties can include the smoke-free language in the lease; others should implement the policy using house rules. The process to enforce a smoke-free policy can also vary by type of property. For more information, visit www.HUD.gov or call the Iowa office at 515-284-4512.



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Ready to go Smoke Free?

Log on to our web site to learn more about the benefits of smoke-free multi-unit housing and the steps you can take to create a smoke-free environment in your building.

www.Smoke-FreeHomes.iowa.gov



www.Smoke-FreeHomes.iowa.gov
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