



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ'S)

Q: Does a smoke-free policy unfairly discriminate against smokers?

A: No. Smokers are not a legally protected group or class. Smoking is a chosen behavior, not an inherent characteristic, like sex, race or ethnicity. There is no "right to smoke" under state or federal law. You, as the property owner, have the right to adopt policies that protect your investment and the health of your tenants.

Q: Won't I lose interested tenants if I institute a smoke-free policy?

A: The majority of renters want to live in a smoke-free residence. 78% of the Maine's rental population (including smokers) polled in a recent survey would choose to live in a smoke-free environment. People are used to smoking outside, since Maine workplace and public place laws require these venues to be smoke-free. It is unlikely that someone will refuse an apartment because they can't smoke in the interior.

In addition, while 78% of the tenant population wants to live in smoke-free housing, less than 40% of Maine apartments are smoke-free. A landlord that adopts a smoke-free policy has an edge on the market, not a barrier to finding tenants!

Q: Will I lose money by implementing a smoke-free policy?

A: No, quite the opposite. Smoke-free policies SAVE you money. A unit where smoking is allowed can cost you two to six times as much to turnover as a smoke-free unit would cost. This translates to anywhere between \$600 to \$1500 MORE than the average cost per turnover due to increased labor, paint, carpeting, laminate and furniture replacement. In multi-unit apartment complexes, this can translate into dollar savings in the tens of thousands each year. A smoke-free policy may also help save you money on property casualty insurance, and will most certainly reduce your risk of fire. Smoking-related fires are the number one cause of home fire deaths and one of the top causes of residential property damage.

Q: I have a large property and I don't think enforcement is going to be possible. Is this true?

A: No. Smoke-free policies are largely self-enforcing and there is far more anxiety prior to policy implementation than after. Staff time spent on enforcement of a smoke-free policy will likely be less than time spent mediating disputes between smoking and non-smoking tenants when there is no smoke-free policy. If a smoke-free policy is adequately announced residents will follow it, like any other requirement. Remember, most tenants want to live in smoke-free housing, so when there is a particular violator in your building, you are likely to hear about it from the non-smoking and/or rule abiding tenants. Reminding tenants of the rules is also key to a successful policy. Signage placement around the building makes it clear to all occupants that smoking is not permitted. Decals, magnets and key chains can be provided to you at no cost by the Smoke-Free Housing Coalition of Maine.



FAQ'S Continued

Q: I want to adopt a smoke-free policy. What practical steps should I take to begin the implementation process?

A: Host information sessions about the upcoming change and send out letters to all tenants notifying them of your intent well in advance of the change.

Let your tenants know where smoking will be allowed (if at all). Plan to post "Smoke-Free" or "No Smoking" notices or signs accordingly. The Smoke-Free Housing Coalition can provide you with free window decals, key chains, and magnets to help remind your tenants of the rules.

Explain the new smoke-free lease language or house rule. Highlight and discuss the reasons why this is going into effect. Give your tenants an opportunity to ask questions or to make suggestions.

Tell your tenants when the policy (house rule or lease change) will go into effect, and make sure you give them plenty of notice. Remind them that the most important reason for the change is to prevent exposure to secondhand smoke. The Smoke-Free Housing Coalition of Maine can provide you with sample letters.

If possible, check back in with your tenants just before the change goes into effect and afterward. There may be an occasional conflict between tenants that needs to be resolved. You can ensure that people will follow the change if you address any infractions early and consistently.

Q: I already have a smoke-free policy. Is there any way I can benefit from the Smoke-Free Housing Coalition of Maine?

A: Absolutely! The Smoke-Free Housing Coalition of Maine's website www.smokefreeforme.org offers a free, online registry for landlords to advertise their smoke-free units. Just like any other online ad service, the site allows tenants to search by location for smoke-free building in their area, but at no cost to you!

We also provide signage and materials to help remind and educate your tenants on the smoke-free policy. These include fact sheets, window decals, key chains, and magnets...all completely free! The Smoke-Free Housing Coalition of Maine is also available to provide technical assistance concerning smoke-free policies and related issues.