

BEFORE THE BOARD OF HEALTH  
SPOKANE REGIONAL HEALTH DISTRICT

GUIDELINE AND RECOMMENDATION #16-01

A GUIDELINE AND RECOMMENDATION TO ENCOURAGE AND ASSIST OWNERS AND MANAGERS OF MULTI-UNIT HOUSING TO PROTECT THE HEALTH OF TENANTS THROUGH SMOKE-FREE HOUSING POLICIES.

**Purpose:**

The Board of Health encourages property owners and managers to protect the health of tenants through smoke-free housing policies. Spokane Regional Health District's *Step-by-Step to Smoke-Free Housing* is available to assist property owners as they consider adopting policies. Smoke-free policies are more restrictive than the state's no smoking law and provide greater protection of public health.

**Public Health Benefits:**

Smoke-free policies are designed to protect people from the dangers of secondhand smoke and vapor.

- Secondhand smoke contains numerous harmful chemicals, more than 50 of which are known to cause cancer. Exposure can cause lung cancer, heart disease, exacerbation of asthma, higher incidence of respiratory illness, and other adverse effects on respiratory health. Children are also at risk of sudden infant death syndrome, bronchitis, pneumonia, and ear infections.
- Evidence from multiple studies indicates that the vapor produced by vaping devices is not safe, having been found to contain chemicals known to cause cancer such as formaldehyde, acetaldehyde, lead, nickel and chromium; ultrafine particulates, acrolein, tin, toluene and aluminum which are associated with a range of negative health effects such as skin, eye and respiratory irritation, neurological effects, damage of reproductive systems and premature death from heart attacks and stroke; and toxic chemicals such as diethylene glycol which is toxic to humans.

Multi-unit housing residents are particularly susceptible to secondhand smoke exposure because the smoke can infiltrate other areas through ventilation systems, windows, cracks in floors and walls, stairways elevator shafts, plumbing, electrical lines, among other routes.

There is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke. In fact, every year over 40,000 deaths in the United States are the result of exposure to secondhand smoke.

In addition to problems with exposure to secondhand smoke and vapor in the air, toxic particulates can stick to walls and adhere to dust, and gases can be absorbed into carpets, draperies, and cloth furniture. Young children are particularly vulnerable, because they can touch contaminated surfaces and then ingest the residue by putting their hands in their mouths.

Smoke-free housing policies can also encourage and support smoking cessation and reduce smoking initiation. Research has demonstrated that environments that are smoke free help to establish norms that reduce the social acceptability of smoking, motivate smokers to quit and make it easier for them to do so.

**Other Benefits:**

Property owners who implement smoke-free policies also benefit. Owners experience lower cleaning costs, shorter turn-around time between unit rentals, lower risk of fire, and may pay lower insurance premiums. Smoke-free policies can also help owners attract and retain renters. Approximately 80 percent of the population in Spokane County does not smoke and local surveys show that the majority of smokers would like to live in a smoke-free building.

**Board of Health Action:**

The Board of Health applauds those multi-unit housing owners who have already taken this important action.

The Board of Health encourages all multi-unit housing owners to consider similar action. Smoke-free housing policies can specify limited areas where people can smoke or can prohibit smoking on the entire property. Policies can include the use of cigarettes, electronic cigarettes, cigars, hookah, marijuana and other combustible products that produce smoke or vapor.

The Board of Health also recommends that owners use Spokane Regional Health District's *Step-by-Step to Smoke-Free Housing* to help them decide what kind of policy best suits the property, understand the steps needed to become smoke-free, review sample policy documents and a tenant survey, and learn about resources to help tenants who smoke find cessation resources.

Spokane Regional Health District also has free window clings and other signage available. Contact the Tobacco Prevention and Control Program at 509.324.1530 or visit srhd.org.

Signed this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2016 in Spokane, Washington.

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