Thirdhand Smoke Resource Center

What are the advantages of making my rental properties smokefree?

The Short Answer

Thirdhand smoke is the chemicals left behind when someone smokes tobacco. Thirdhand smoke is unhealthy for people and pets. It can stick around for a long time in homes and cars. It gets into your body if you inhale, swallow, or touch the chemicals. Getting rid of it is really hard and can cost a lot of money.

Smokefree properties protect people's health by reducing their exposure to toxic second- and thirdhand smoke. Making rental properties smokefree will also save you money. Many people know the dangers of secondhand smoke and want to live somewhere smokefree. In addition, smokefree properties have less fire risk and smoking-related maintenance, such as having to do less deep cleaning of thirdhand smoke-polluted rooms between tenants.

The Long Answer

Thirdhand smoke is the chemical residue from tobacco smoke. It is also called "tobacco smoke residue" or "stale tobacco smoke." The chemicals in thirdhand smoke are toxic to humans, especially children. It can linger for years in dust and on household surfaces. It can also become embedded in carpets, furniture, clothes, and building materials. It is difficult and expensive to remove.

Smokefree rental properties are in high demand. Surveys show that most renters prefer 100% smokefree properties.

Smokefree rental properties save lives and protect the health of tenants by:

- Eliminating current tenants' exposure to secondhand smoke that drifts between apartments.
- Preventing future residents' exposure to thirdhand smoke chemicals that have become embedded in rugs, walls, and other surfaces in units where previous tenants smoked.

Smokefree rental properties save money by:

- Reducing the risk of tobacco-related fires in apartments.
- Lowering fire and liability insurance premiums for the property.
- Avoiding the need for expensive smoking-related repairs when tenants move out.
- Reducing litter from tobacco waste, such as cigarette butts.

- Reducing complaints about unpleasant odors and unhealthy air because of smoke intrusion.

Save lives, save money. Make your property smokefree.

Do you have more questions about the toxic legacy of tobacco smoke, how it affects human health, and what we can do about it? Learn more here.

Updated: March 2025

Sources:

Licht AS, King BA, Travers MJ, et al. Attitudes, experiences, and acceptance of smoke-free policies among US multiunit housing residents. *American Journal of Public Health*. 2012;102(10):1868-1871. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2012.300717

Ong MK, Diamant AL, Zhou Q, et al. Estimates of smoking-related property costs in California multiunit housing. *American Journal of Public Health*. 2012;102(3):490-493. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2011.300170

Smokefree housing: Renter poll. *American Lung Association*. 2020. Retrieved from: https://center4tobaccopolicy.org/tobacco-policy/smokefree-multi-unit-housing/smokefree-housing-renter-poll/

Thorpe LE, Anastasiou E, Wyka K, et al. Evaluation of secondhand smoke exposure in New York City public housing after implementation of the 2018 Federal Smoke-Free Housing Policy. JAMA Network Open. 2020;3(11):e2024385. doi: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2020.24385

Toy P, Yount C, Meng Y, et al. Health at risk: Policies are needed to end cigarette, marijuana, and e-cigarette secondhand smoke in multi-unit housing in Los Angeles. UCLA Center for Health Policy Research. 2020. Retrieved from: https://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/our-work/publications/health-risk-policies-are-needed-end-cigarette-marijuana-and-e-cigarette-secondhand-smoke-multi-unit