

Clearing the Air

of tobacco smoke in Snohomish County

A biannual newsletter from Snohomish Health District providing Snohomish County leaders with the latest tobacco prevention and control information and resources.

Summer 2009

KEYNOTE

Tobacco Prevention and Control Funding in Washington State Reduced

Charlene Shambach, Community Health Division Director
Pam Wessel-Estes, Tobacco Prevention Program Manager

Funding for tobacco prevention and control activities in our state was dramatically reduced recently. For the 2009-2011 biennial budget, tobacco programming was cut by 43 percent – from 52 million to 30 million. All remaining funds in the Washington State Tobacco Prevention and Control Account (created in 1999 from a multi-state lawsuit settlement) have been removed, which will likely create substantial reductions in funding after June 2011 unless our Legislature authorizes additional funding.

Despite a significant reduction in local tobacco program funding, the Snohomish Health District (SHD) remains committed to supporting comprehensive tobacco prevention and control strategies. These approaches include: 1. Reducing overall tobacco use, 2. Implementing tobacco-free policies across the public and private sectors, 3. Eliminating exposure to secondhand tobacco smoke, 4. Reducing youth and young adult tobacco initiation, and 5. Informing the public about tobacco use and its effects on health and lifestyle.

Tobacco related illness remains a leading cause of chronic disease and death in the United States today. Long term, effective strategies to continue to reduce tobacco use and eliminate exposure to harmful secondhand smoke are crucial to improving the long term health of all citizens. As policy makers, your understanding and support of public health issues such as Tobacco Prevention and Control allows staff of SHD to carry out our very important mission: to improve the health of individuals, families and communities through disease prevention, health promotion and protection from environmental threats.

\$\$ Adopting No-Smoking Policies in Multi-Unit Housing Makes Good Business Sense \$\$

The air in Washington has been cleared of smoke in public places and places of employment since December 2005, but many individuals are finding themselves still being exposed to secondhand smoke in a place that is unexpected: their own home. Uninvited secondhand smoke can drift into living spaces from someone else's apartment or condo through open windows, under doorways, through ventilation systems,

Cost Differences to Rehabilitate Apartments Smoked-in or Not Smoked-in Units:

	Not Smoked-in	Smoked-in
General Clean	\$90.00	\$300.00
Refrigerator	\$20.00	\$45.00
Stove	\$20.00	\$45.00
Dishwasher	\$20.00	\$35.00
Vinyl	\$0.00	\$700.00
Carpet Replace	\$0.00	\$775.00
Carpet Clean	\$80.00	\$120.00
Walls	\$0.00	\$550.00
Surrounds of Tub	\$0.00	\$45.00
Blinds	\$0.00	\$30.00
Laminate	\$0.00	\$250.00
Total	\$230.00	\$2,895.00

\$2,665 more to turn an apartment unit after it has been smoked-in for 5-7 years. 92% more costly for a smoked-in unit.

Bill Batson, Housing Maintenance Manager, Senior Services of Snohomish County, May 2009

electrical sockets, as well as many other avenues. Because of the health issues involved and conflict between residents that may result, many landlords and owners have found that adopting no-smoking policies for their buildings is the best way to solve the problem. Designating an area more than 25' from the building as an alternative site for people to smoke. This allows those who choose to continue smoking to do so, without risking the health and well-being of others who don't smoke.

Landlords and owners make many decisions to create healthy, happy apartment and condo communities. Some properties, for example, ban pets or regulate loud music to ensure a comfortable experience for all residents. The decision to adopt a no-smoking policy is the one change that can dramatically improve residents' enjoyment of their units while protecting everyone's health.

Research shows that funding and maintaining strong tobacco prevention programs can lead to fewer people starting and continuing to smoke.

Smoke Free Housing Policies

Over the last year alone, thousands of units across Washington State have become smoke-free. Consider the following six benefits, as reported by property managers who have already made the transition:

- Meeting market demand:** In 2005, the Healthy Community Environments Survey found that about 85 percent of Washington renters prefer to live in smoke-free housing. In fact, over half of those who smoke indicated they prefer smoke-free housing. Throughout the state and the nation, repeated studies have found that a significant majority of renters prefer smoke-free housing, many of whom indicate they'd even pay higher rent to live in a smoke-free community. Regardless of whether they live in multi- or single-unit residences, 88 percent of Washington residents don't allow smoking in their homes. When it comes to market demand, Washingtonians have a clear preference for smoke-free housing.
- Reducing cleaning and maintenance costs:** Estimates indicate that it can cost an additional \$1,000-\$3,000 or more to turn over a smoking unit, depending on how long and how much the unit has been smoked in. Whether it's the smell, the yellow walls or the burn holes, cleaning up after a tenant who smokes is time consuming and costly. Adopting a no-smoking policy will save money on cleaning, painting and repair costs.
- Protecting property from fire:** In Washington, smoking-related fires are responsible for more deaths than any other fire source. When these fires occur, they cause more injuries, deaths, and property damage than other types of residential fires. A no-smoking policy reduces the risk.
- Adopting a no-smoking policy is legal.** Owners and landlords of multi-unit residences can set reasonable rules that protect their investment and the health of their tenants. Smoking is not a protected behavior under any federal, state or local laws. It is not a characteristic that people are born with, prohibiting the behavior doesn't discriminate against any particular group. A no-smoking policy doesn't mean that landlords can't rent to people who smoke – it just means that smoking is prohibited in areas that interfere with the health of others, according to the rules established in their lease agreement.
- Avoiding liability:** No-smoking policies may protect apartment owners from certain liabilities. Non-smokers with serious breathing disabilities or smoke allergies have legal protection under federal and state laws, including the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Fair Housing Act. That's because secondhand smoke can interfere with some disabled tenants' ability to have equal access to, and enjoyment of their housing. Since no known ventilation technology is capable of keeping out secondhand smoke, the only way to completely protect the health of tenants is to create a no-smoking policy or to move people who smoke and non-smokers into separate buildings.
- Protecting the health of residents:** Secondhand smoke is toxic, causing 30 times as many lung cancer deaths as all regulated air pollutants combined. In fact, every year over 38,000 deaths in the United States are the result of exposure to secondhand smoke. It's also important to ensure that tenants who smoke have access to quit resources. The Washington State Tobacco Quit Line (1.800.QUIT NOW) or www.quitline.com offers free coaching to all Washington residents who call. The facts are clear: going smoke-free is a good decision for both business and the health of residents. Visit www.SmokeFreeWashington.com for additional downloadable tools and information about creating healthy smoke-free environments or contact Annie Peterson at Snohomish Health District at 425.339.5279 for additional information. A PowerPoint presentation is also available for staff and management interested in knowing more about the benefits of smoke-free housing.

“The debate is over. The science is clear. Secondhand smoke is not a mere annoyance but a serious health hazard.”

former U.S. Surgeon General Richard Carmona, *The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke*, 2006

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People who smoke are not protected by state or federal Fair Housing Laws. They are, in fact, in the same category as people with pets or people who drink beer. They are a consumer group. Landlords can establish rules for the protection of their property and the no-smoking rule is legitimate.

Esther Schiller, Director, Smokefree Apartment House Registry, Granada Hills, CA

(Source: Washington State Department of Health, edited by Annie Peterson, Snohomish Health District)

Help keep Washington smoke-free!

Still smell smoke?

Save **425.339.5237** in your phone to:

- Report violations
- Find out about quitting



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