

SMOKE FREE | MULTI-UNIT HOUSING NORTH-CAROLINA

ENFORCEMENT

Enforcing Smoke-Free Policy

One of the biggest concerns you may have about smoke-free policies is how to enforce them. Many operators who have already gone smoke-free have been able to successfully enforce a smoke-free policy by treating it like any other policy, by involving tenants, and by being clear and consistent. Following this advice from other operators will help make it easier for you to enforce a smoke-free policy.

Treat It Like Any Other Policy

Enforcing a smoke-free policy is no different than enforcing other routine lease policies. You can use the same strategies that work for enforcing other policies, such as those that protect against drugs or crime.

Proving that someone is smoking doesn't have to be complicated either. According to Scott Alderman, President of Landura Management Associates, who has gone 100% smoke-free in all of his properties:

"It's not a burden on staff time. We ask staff to pay attention. Do you see it? Do you smell it? It's just like anything we look for—drugs, now cigarette butts, unauthorized guests, pets. It just becomes part of routine checks."

Your Residents Are Your Allies

Your tenants can help you detect any smoke-free policy violations. Sally Haile suggests that partnering with your non-smoking tenants can help make enforcement easier:

"Nonsmokers definitely appreciate that we've implemented the policy, but we need their help for enforcement. It has to be a working relationship, and we always try to convey that."



Scott Alderman maintains his smoke-free properties by treating enforcement like any other policy. Image credit: Scott Alderman.

Empower residents to speak up if they see a violation by having complaint forms available. In the end, violations may be minimal because most tenants are nonsmokers and want the policy, many smokers don't mind keeping smoke out of their homes, and smoke-free policies make it easier for smokers to quit.

Be Consistent and Organized

If residents sign a smoke-free lease addendum or agreement, make sure they understand the rules and consequences. The policy must be clear about what constitutes a lease violation and what the penalties are if a tenant breaks the policy. Clear language will help tenants understand the new policy. Predictable enforcement will help ensure that complaints are kept to a minimum.

One decision you may need to make is whether to “grandfather” certain residents. Scott Alderman says his company chose not to “grandfather” because it would make it harder for them to enforce the policy:

“If we grandfather, we’re losing teeth in rules. We have some elderly communities where some only leave if they pass away. Remove that conversation by not grandfathering. Stay on top of people. Explain the rule upfront. You can’t waver. Because if you waver on one, it’s a slippery slope.”

Smart Tips

- Involve tenants as allies.
- Make sure policy language is clear.
- Enforce the policy consistently for all residents.

To hear other property owners’ and managers’ stories:
Visit the NC Division of Public Health’s Smoke-Free Housing Website at
<http://www.smokefreehousingnc.com>

