

# The Cost of Allowing Smoking in Multi-Unit Housing



*Secondhand smoke can be very damaging to both the health of the resident and the building. Adopting a smoke-free policy helps to protect the health of the residents and value of the building.*

## How can secondhand smoke damage property?

Smoking in an apartment unit or condo residence can cause the following significant property damage:<sup>1</sup>

- Sticky residue on the wall, carpets, upholstery with brownish discoloration
- Stale odor in porous surfaces like carpets
- Burn marks in carpets, countertops, and other surfaces
- Sink blockage from cigarette ashes
- Damage to air filter and ventilation system
- Fire hazard



*Secondhand smoke residue is obvious after pictures are removed*

## How much can secondhand smoke damage cost?

Because of the residue and odor left behind, property managers have reported that it often costs two to three times more to clean up and turnover a unit that has been smoked in compared to a smoke-free unit.<sup>2</sup> The cost associated with unit turnover can add up quickly and cause financial strain for the property owner. In heavily smoked-in units, items like flooring, countertops and appliances need to be replaced in addition to extra coats of paint and general cleaning costs. The cost analysis below compares the cost of turning over a smoked-in unit to a smoke-free unit.

	Non-Smoking	Light Smoking	Heavy Smoking
General Cleaning	\$240	\$500	\$720
Paint	\$170	\$225	\$480
Flooring	\$50	\$950	\$1,425
Appliances	\$60	\$75	\$490
Bathroom	\$40	\$60	\$400
<b>total</b>	<b>\$560</b>	<b>\$1,810</b>	<b>\$3,515</b>



*Cigarette burn in carpet.*

Data reflects surveys from housing authorities and subsidized housing facilities in New England. Collected and reported by Smoke-Free Housing New England, 2009. This information is courtesy of the National Center of Healthy Housing.

## What is the bottom line?

**Bottom line:** a smoke-free policy helps the bottom line. It saves property owners and apartment managers the elevated turnover costs involved with turning over smoked-in units.

*Updated January, 2014*

### References

1. Winickoff, J., J. Friebely, S. Tanski, C. Sherrod, G. Matt, M. Hovell, and R. McMillen. "Beliefs About the Health Effects of 'Thirdhand' Smoke and Home Smoking Bans." *Pediatrics* 2009; 123e74-e79.
2. Smoke-Free Housing Coalition of Maine. "Myth vs. Reality." N.p., n.d. Web. Jan. 2012.

*For more information, please visit <http://breatheeasygahomes.org/>  
This was adapted from the Live Smoke Free Program of Minnesota, [www.mnsmokefreehousing.org](http://www.mnsmokefreehousing.org)*