

Smoke-Free Common Interest Communities: Results of a Survey of Minnesota Property Managers



In 2009, the Center for Energy and Environment, in partnership with the Public Health Law Center and the Association for Nonsmokers-Minnesota, surveyed 17 property managers of owner-occupied common interest communities (condos, townhomes, and other owner-occupied attached housing) in Minnesota. This survey was conducted in order to determine:

- How often property managers deal with issues related to owner-occupants being exposed to tobacco smoke in their housing units; and
- Experiences with or perceptions of smoke-free policies for common interest communities.

Survey results indicated that most of the managers had no direct experience with common-interest communities that had a smoke-free policy that covered individual resident units. The one manager who indicated experience with such a policy indicated that there were no negative outcomes.

The Managers and Their Properties

A total of 17 property managers were surveyed through telephone interviews. The respondents had been in their current position with their employers from 1 to 32 years, with a mean tenure of 10.8 years.

The companies for whom the respondents work manage a total of 1,324 common interest communities in Minnesota— many of these communities have multiple buildings. The respondents themselves manage a total of 345 common interest communities, which include 1,993 buildings and 27,009 units.

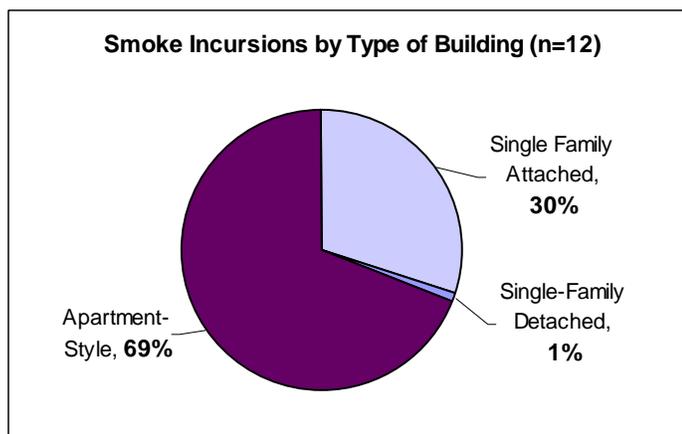
More than three-quarters of these units are in single-family attached buildings (i.e. townhomes). Most of the remaining units are in apartment-style buildings.

Common Interest Communities, Buildings, and Units Managed by Respondents

	Buildings	Units	Building %	Unit %
Apartment-Style	182	5,365	10%	20%
Single-Family Attached	930	20,512	53%	77%
Single-Family Detached	659	659	37%	3%
Sum	1,771*	26,536*	100%	100%
Total given by respondent	1,993 *	27,009*		

* Managers were asked to provide a total number of buildings and then break it down by type. The sum of the type breakdown did not always match the total given— for this reason, the sum of type and total number given do not match.

Most Managers Reported Some Experience with Secondhand Smoke Incursions



Respondents reported an average of 7.4 problems with tobacco smoke incursion since they've been in their current positions, or an average of 1.2 cases per year. Five of the 17 respondents reported no problems with smoke incursions.

Although apartment-style units only account for 20% of the units in these managers' portfolios, they account for nearly 70% of the secondhand smoke problems.

When a problem with secondhand smoke intrusion was reported to a property manager, smoke was intruding into a resident's unit in over 92% of cases and onto their patio, deck, or balcony in 34% of cases.

Managers Have Very Little Direct Experience with Smoke-Free Policies

Only one of 17 respondents manages any common-interest communities that prohibit smoking both in indoor common areas and individual units. This community adopted a policy in 2007 in order to reduce disagreements between residents over smoke incursions. The smoke-free policy covers individual units; individual balconies, patios, and decks; and indoor and outdoor common areas.

The respondent reported that this policy has had **no effect on: how long it took owners to sell the units, the sale price of the units, time required to manage the community, maintenance costs, and legal or insurance costs for the community.** The respondent indicated that there were no other negative effects of the policy. The only other positive effect he identified was "not having to deal with smoke smell."



Manager See Potential Benefits of Smoke-Free Policies

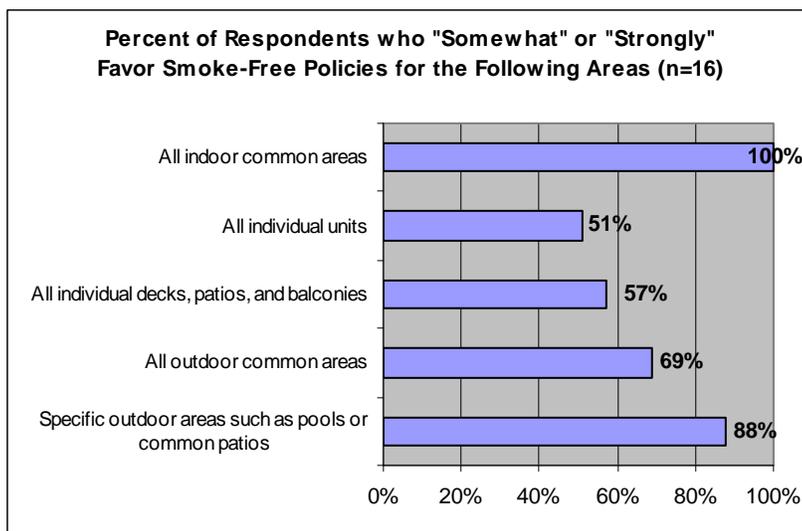
Only six of the 16 (38%) respondents who do not manage a smoke-free community were aware of any common-interest communities in Minnesota that have established smoke-free policies for all individual units.

Respondents who had no direct experience managing a smoke-free community perceived "providing a healthier or cleaner environment for residents" as the primary potential benefit of a smoke-free policy. Other benefits mentioned were "reduced maintenance costs" and "attracting 'better' buyers."

Respondents main concern, identified by 50% of those answering, was that a smoke-free policy would make it more difficult to sell units or reduce the price. A second area of concern, mentioned by 38% of those answering, was the cost of effort associated with enforcement of the policy.

Many Managers Support Smoke-Free Policies

- 100% of respondents "Strongly Favor" (94%) or "Somewhat Favor" (6%) a smoke-free policy for all indoor common areas. In fact, over three-quarters of respondents strongly favored statutes or ordinances requiring smoke-free indoor common areas.
- 51% of respondents "Strongly Favor" (13%) or "Somewhat Favor" (38%) a smoke-free policy for all individual units.
- 88% of residents "Strongly Favor" (75%) or "Somewhat Favor" (13%) a smoke-free policy for specific outdoor common areas such as pools or patios.



Smoke-Free Policy Resources Are Available

- For sample policy documents and more information, go to: www.mnsmokefreehousing.org

This research was conducted by:



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www.mncee.org



Live Smoke Free
St. Paul, MN
www.mnsmokefreehousing.org



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