



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Allentown Housing Authority Bans Indoor Smoking At All Properties

New Policy Aimed At Creating Healthier Environment For Residents, Employees

Allentown, Pa. -- Citing the increased risk of fire, rising maintenance costs and ongoing concerns about the health effects of second-hand smoke, the Allentown Housing Authority (AHA) Board of Directors voted late last year to ban indoor smoking at all AHA properties.

The ban, which became fully effective July 1, makes AHA the first housing authority in the Lehigh Valley and one of the first in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to prohibit indoor smoking in all of its properties and offices. It includes all community rooms and community bathrooms, lobbies, reception areas, hallways, laundry rooms, stairways, offices and elevators, inside all apartments and within 10 feet of the buildings, including entry ways, porches, balconies and patios.

The policy applies to all residents, employees, guests, visitors, contractors and anyone else in AHA properties.

“Smoking and secondhand smoke are well-known health hazards,” said AHA Executive Director Dan Farrell. “Allowing people to continue smoking within our buildings or apartments exposes all AHA residents and site staff to known carcinogens. And in addition indoor smoking is the number one cause of residential fires in Pennsylvania.”

“We have had a positive response from residents through a survey we conducted before taking this step, and even many smokers recognized the need for action and accept it,” Farrell continued.

Mayor Ed Pawlowski endorsed the ban, calling it a positive step that will improve the quality of life for all AHA residents and staff and help the city in its ongoing efforts to improve living conditions, reduce litter and create safer neighborhoods. The mayor last week announced a new citywide initiative to reduce litter through the placement of up to 80 cigarette receptacles for businesses in the downtown commercial district.

“This is a great step for the Allentown Housing Authority and it fits right in with what we are trying to do on a citywide basis to improve the quality of life, make Allentown a clean city and reduce the fire danger for all residents,” the mayor said.

The new policy does not mean that residents or employees must quit smoking. They will be permitted to smoke outdoors as long as they are more than 10 feet away from any building entrances.

Residents are responsible for their households and guests or visitors. Failure to comply means a serious violation of the lease agreement and residents could also be charged for the costs of removing any smoke odor or residue left in the home.

Early warnings for violations will be verbal but a written warning will be issued with the third violation. A lease termination notice will be sent after the fourth violation but there will be an appeal option. If a fifth violation occurs, the lease will be terminated.

A lease addendum outlining the major points of the policy was sent to all residents late last year and reminders have been published in the past three editions of The HomeFront, the authority’s quarterly newsletter that is delivered to all residents and staff.

AHA site staff and resident service coordinators were provided with information on resources to help residents stop smoking, if they wish to pursue that option and more than a half-dozen employees and several residents have taken advantage of the available programs to help them quit over the past six months.

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