



New Tools for Finding Smoke-Free Apartments in Snohomish County

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Health District releases city maps, rankings of multi-family complexes

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SNOHOMISH COUNTY, Wash – Indoor air quality can have significant impacts on your health, especially when exposed to harmful chemicals, harmful cleaning products and smoke. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), secondhand smoke caused 34,000 heart disease deaths and 7,300 lung disease deaths among non-smokers between 2005 and 2009. Non-smokers are most commonly exposed to secondhand smoke in the workplace and in the home.

Even though the Smoking in Public Places law went into effect in 2005—expanded in 2016 to include vaping—apartment complexes can set and enforce their own rules. This has led to a variety of smoking policies in apartment complexes, ranging from the ability to smoke in individual units to an entirely smoke-free community, where an individual must leave the property to smoke.

To help people living in multi-family complexes around Snohomish County breathe easier, the Snohomish Health District has developed maps and smoke-free rankings of apartments by city. These maps can be found at www.snohd.org/Smoke-Free-Housing.

“The purpose of this initiative is two-fold,” said Jennifer Reid, a healthy communities specialist focused on tobacco prevention for the Snohomish Health District. “We want to help people find healthy, smoke-free housing while also encouraging apartment complex owners to consider the benefits of becoming smoke-free.”

More than 450 complexes having at least four units were identified and contacted in late-2017, requesting voluntary participation in the smoking policy survey. Of the 209 complexes that responded, Health District staff ranked them according to the criteria shown in the table

below:

Ranking	Number of Complexes	Current Smoking Policy	Likelihood of Secondhand Smoke Exposure
Gold	74	Non-smoking community. No smoking allowed anywhere on the property.	Low
Silver	49	Smoking is allowed but the individual must be in a designated smoking area or at least 25 ft. away from doors and windows.	Medium
Bronze	18	Smoking is allowed on patios and balconies as well as 25 ft. from doors and windows.	High
Not Ranked	68	Smoking is allowed inside the apartment home, patios/balconies, and outside at least 25 ft. from doors and windows (but not in common spaces such as the laundry room).	Very High

Now that the initial survey has been completed, and participating complexes notified, Reid plans to continue improving the list. Next steps include:

- Following up with those complexes that were in the process of updating their smoking policies, and assist as needed.
- Working with complexes that expressed an interest in learning more or developing a stricter policy.
- Reaching out to complexes that did not respond, as well as identifying multi-family properties not included in the first survey.
- Visiting complexes without specific policies to encourage owners and managers to consider adopting new smoke-free policies.

Converting an apartment complex to a smoke-free environment can be advantageous for both the resident and the owner. Data released by [Smoke Free Washington](#) found that more than 95% of non-smoking Washingtonians, as well as 75% of Washingtonians who smoke, want to live in smoke-free housing. For property managers, there are [real financial benefits to going smoke-free](#), such as lower costs for insurance and general maintenance.

The Snohomish Health District works for a safer and healthier community through disease prevention, health promotion, and protection from environmental threats. To read more about the District and for important health information, visit www.snohd.org.

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