



**Northwestern
Health Unit**

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Northwestern Health Unit asks providers of multi-unit housing to consider smoke-free policies for Fire Prevention Week

October 4 to 10 is Fire Prevention Week, and the Northwestern Health Unit is asking multi-unit housing providers in the region to take steps towards making their buildings smoke-free. Currently, one in three Ontarians resides in an apartment, condo or co-op where they may be involuntarily exposed to smoke through shared walls, hallways or ventilation systems. Smoking indoors is also the number one source of fires in the home.

“There is no safe exposure to second-hand smoke and ventilation systems do not adequately prevent people from being exposed to a neighbour’s smoking,” says Dr. Kit Young-Hoon, Medical Officer of Health at the Northwestern Health Unit. “As smoking is the number one cause of fires in the homes, it is important for landlords and tenants to come together and adopt no-smoking policies for their buildings to help protect everyone from unnecessary health and safety risks.”

Exposure to second-hand smoke in multi-unit housing affects the health of all residents, especially infants, the elderly, and those with pre-existing health conditions like asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Second-hand smoke contains more than 4,000 chemicals; of which 69 are cancer causing and over 250 others are regulated toxins.

“Avoiding smoking in or near the home or on balconies is one of the easiest ways to prevent fires in multi-unit or shared housing environments,” says Ken Kurz, Fire Chief at Dryden Fire Service. “Adopting a no-smoking policy creates healthier indoor air and helps prevent residents, their families and pets from being put in unnecessary danger.”

Tenants can ask for buildings to adopt no-smoking policies, which will help benefit their health through reduced exposure to second-hand smoke. Landlords can implement a no-smoking policy that can help reduce the risk of fire, which will also help improve their bottom-line. Properties with no-smoking policies are cheaper on average to renovate or turnover than those that allow smoking. No smoking policies can also lead to cheaper insurance premiums due to reduced risk of fire.



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To receive an information package on how to create a smoke-free housing environment, or to receive help with quitting smoking, call your local public health unit office or visit www.nwhu.on.ca.

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