



# TACOMA HOUSING AUTHORITY



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## TACOMA HOUSING AUTHORITY BOARD VOTES TO ADOPT SMOKE-FREE HOUSING POLICY

**Tacoma, Wash.**—In an effort to provide healthier housing for its residents and a healthier work place for its employees, the Tacoma Housing Authority (THA) board recently voted to prohibit smoking in all of its rental housing units. The move makes THA one of the largest housing providers in Pierce County to adopt a smoke-free housing policy.

The smoking ban will go into effect March 1. THA has long prohibited smoking in common areas. This new policy will apply to all indoor spaces, including the inside of rented apartments and homes. It also will apply to designated outdoor areas. As part of the implementation of this policy, THA and the Community Transformation Partnership of the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department will connect residents to smoking cessation services and products.

“THA is pleased to join the growing number of public and private property managers that have prohibited smoking,” said Michael Mirra, executive director of THA. “A smoking ban is necessary to allow us to fulfill our fundamental responsibilities as a landlord and an employer to provide safe housing and a safe workplace,” said Mirra.

The Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department and other partners have worked with THA to support this significant health policy decision.

“All Pierce County residents have the right to live in healthy, safe environments that allow them to be productive and engaged citizens,” said Anthony L-T Chen, MD, MPH, director of Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department. “THA’s decision to adopt a smoke-free housing policy is an important step in to improving public health in Pierce County,” he said.

Julie Peterson of Comprehensive Health Education Foundation (CHEF) stated, “We commend the Tacoma Housing Authority Board of Commissioners and staff on the approval of their no-smoking policy. The decision creates safer living conditions for all residents. Health problems are also among the top barriers to accessing and maintaining employment; the Housing Authority’s commitment today reflects their dedication to creating both health and economic opportunities for all residents.”

The Oct. 24 board vote was the result of a nine-month review that included consultation with residents, staff, other property management firms and the expertise of the health department, CHEF, the Tobacco Free Alliance of Pierce County, and the Pacific Northwest Regional Council of the

National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Office (PNRC-NAHRO). Among other research and outreach activities, THA, the health department and these partners hosted numerous meetings and conducted a survey throughout THA properties to elicit the views of residents.

THA's Board considered the information that this review collected, including the following:

- Second hand smoke poses serious immediate and long-term health risks to others including residents, visitors and THA staff;
- In 2008, 956 people died from causes related to tobacco use; this represents 16.3 percent of all deaths in Pierce County;
- There is no effective way to limit the spread of second hand smoke throughout a building;
- Smoking increases THA's maintenance costs, poses a greater risk of fire and increases insurance rates;
- A majority of THA residents favor the smoking ban;
- HUD recommends that housing authorities ban smoking;
- A smoking ban makes rental property more marketable; and
- A smoking ban may help smokers to quit.

Locally and nationally, private and public housing are adopting no smoking policies. In Washington, Seattle, Walla Walla, Spokane, and Renton are making strides in the smoke-free housing movement. In the state, 28 of 38 housing authorities have either a 100 percent no smoking policy or a number of their units are covered by such a policy.

#### **About Tacoma Housing Authority**

Established in 1940, Tacoma Housing Authority engages in a wide range of efforts to help its City meet the growing need for affordable housing. THA develops and manages real estate. It provides rental housing. In partnership with thousands of private landlords, it helps families pay the rent in the private rental market. It delivers supportive services to help families succeed as "tenants, parents, students and wage earners who can live without assistance." It helps them purchase their first home. THA seeks to do its work in ways that help neighborhoods be attractive places to "live, work, attend school, shop and play," and that help its city be "safe, vibrant, prosperous, attractive and just." For more information about THA, go to [www.tacomahousing.org](http://www.tacomahousing.org).

#### **About the Community Transformation Partnership**

Through the Community Transformation Partnership, the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department and its partners promote smoke-free living. The partnership, which the Centers for Disease Control funds, provides educational information and links to cessation resources to increase the availability of and access to smoke- and tobacco-free public housing in Pierce County.

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