

NO BUTTS ABOUT IT: SMOKEOUT DAY PROMOTES HEALTHY HOUSING, LUNGS



KATIE KLANN/NAPLES DAILY NEWS

Posted signs state that smoking is prohibited on the premise at the Orchid Run apartment complex in East Naples.

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Options to avoid second-hand smoke from a neighboring apartment are becoming plentiful.

The trend is clear that more multi-housing communities, from apartments to assisted living facilities, are curtailing or outright prohibiting smoking and other tobacco usage.

The prohibition is usually in all buildings, lanais and grounds or a partial prohibition where one or two buildings of a multi-housing complex will be designated for smokers, according to the state Department of Health officials and the Florida Apartment Association.

"It's all of that," said Lauren Crowley, spokeswoman for the apartment association which represents 530,000 rental communities. "The trend we are seeing is most new communities are being built as smoking free."

The apartment association partnered with the state health department last year to work with apartment complex owners and property managers to educate them about how to become smoke free, about tenant rights and other issues.

"You can't not rent to someone because they are a smoker. You can't discriminate," she said. "You address the behavior."

This Thursday, Nov. 17, is the Great American Smokeout where tobacco users are encouraged to use this date to quit, make a plan to become a non-smoker or at least quit for the day.

A key aspect of the Blue Zones Project for greater longevity is no tobacco use. Seven organizations in Collier County that have gained Blue Zones certification do not allow smoking anywhere on their property; another eight entities are smoke-free worksites that are not yet certified but may be working on it, said Melissa Peacock, tobacco prevention specialist with the Florida Department of Health in Collier.

About 36.5 million Americans smoke, or 15 percent of adults, which is

a decline of 45.1 million smokers with a smoking rate of 20.9 percent in 2005, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States.

The state health department in Tallahassee in 2010 began tracking multi-housing complexes that are completely smoke free or partially smoke free by conducting surveys, according to Ron Davis, statewide tobacco policy manager for Smoke-Free Housing with the state health department.

That first year, the survey found 34 multi-family complexes were smoke free and the number now is 965 statewide, Davis said in an email.

In Collier, 35 properties are smoke free and 22 are in Lee County, according to the list.

The statewide list is not just apartment complexes but includes other types of multi-family housing such as owner-based condominiums, public housing, assisted living and other retirement communities.

What's difficult is getting an accurate number and it's not possible to determine what percentage of multi-family housing complexes are smoke free, Davis said. That's because it is hard to get a handle on the opening of new communities.

"We ask the (complex) managers if they believe that the new smoking policy has a positive effect on their occupancy, a negative effect on their occupancy, or no effect at all," Davis said.

The response was 51 percent believe it has helped boost occupancy rates while 49 percent said it has had no effect.

"Only two people out of 940 that responded believed it had a negative impact," he said.

Crowley, with the state apartment association, agrees there is less of a downside than what may be perceived.

"What we are hearing anecdotally is that people say, 'I want to rent here because it is smoke free,'" Crowley said. "People are willing to commute from one side of town to the other in

order to be in a smoke free environment."

The 282-unit Orchid Run apartment complex in Naples opened smoke free last year and it is 100 percent leased but leasing staff can't say how much of the full occupancy can be attributed to being smoke free or the new amenities, Michelle Johnson, the assistant property manager, said.

People sign an addendum to their lease that they will not smoke or vape in their apartments or balconies, yet there is a designated smoking place near the dog walk, she said. Orchid Run is off Livingston Road south of Golden Gate Parkway.

Jeanette Beraldi, the manager of Orchid Run, said there was talk with the developer of having one building designated for smokers but she said that is hard to manage. The decision was made to be entirely smoke free.

"This is done with the best intentions for our residents, the community environment and the assets," she said, pointing out that smoke can get in sheetrock. "We really don't get push-back."

Smoke-free apartments can be turned over quicker with clean up cost of a two-bedroom, two-bath apartment running \$570 while the expense climbs to \$4,000 from a smoker-occupied unit, according to the state health department.

Exposure to secondhand smoke is linked to the death of 41,000 nonsmoking adults each year from heart disease and lung cancer and to the death of 400 infants from sudden infant death syndrome, according to the CDC.

About 58 million Americans are exposed to secondhand smoke, some of which occurs in their homes. In rental housing, more than one in three non-smokers are exposed to secondhand smoke, which can travel in multi-housing complexes through doorways, cracks in walls, ventilation system and it can travel through electrical systems and plumbing, according to the CDC.

For help with smoking cessation, go to www.tobaccofreeflorida.com.