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Boston set to become largest city in US to ban smoking in public housing

Posted by Matt Rocheleau September 28, 2012 02:55 PM

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By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

Next week, Boston will become largest city in the country to ban smoking in public housing.

The plan that was formally introduced a year ago will go into effect on Sunday, Sept. 30, banning anyone from smoking inside Boston Housing Authority residential buildings, city officials said.

“The City of Boston is proud to be on the forefront of having smoke-free living in our public housing,” Mayor Thomas M. Menino said in a statement. “All our residents deserve a safe, healthy environment to live and raise their families in.”

Last January, public housing residents in Boston began signing lease addendums dictating that each household member and their guests agree to not smoke inside their apartment, elsewhere in the building or within a specified distance from the building, the authority said in a press release.

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Compliance with that non-smoking policy is required regardless of whether a tenant has signed the lease addendum, the release said. Those found in violation are subject a fine of up to \$250 and other lease enforcement actions.

The Boston Housing Authority is the city's largest landlord and it is the largest public housing authority in New England. Across 60 developments and some other smaller sites, the authority owns and manages about 14,000 units that house about 27,000 people.

"We are excited to implement this policy for the well-being of all of our residents," said a statement from Boston Housing Authority administrator Bill McGonagle. "This creates a healthy environment for everyone, especially children, residents suffering from asthma, and our elderly who are afflicted with emphysema and cardiovascular disease."

The US Housing and Urban Development department approved the city housing authority's non-smoking policy last summer, officials said. The state Department of Housing and Community Development has also signed-off on the policy.

Several weeks ago, final notices were sent to remind residents of the forthcoming policy, according to the release.

The housing authority said it regularly receives transfer requests from residents who want to live in housing free of second-hand smoke.

"These transfer requests document the hazards that second-hand smoke is causing for BHA residents, many of whom are elderly or children with asthma, cancer or other illnesses," the authority said in the release.

The authority said that in a survey of 1,300 of its residents, 90 percent, including those who said they smoke, reported that they support a non-smoking housing environment.

The policy does not prohibit individuals who smoke from living in Boston's public housing owned and managed properties, officials said.

The housing authority has partnered with the Boston Public Health Commission to provide smoking cessation counseling, free nicotine patches and other resources for residents who want to try to quit smoking, according to the

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other resources for residents who want to try to quit smoking, according to the release.

Last year, the city also launched a registry, bostonsmokefreehomes.org, for landlords to list smoke-free units, so that renters can find them more easily.

For more information on the non-smoking policy and lease addendum for city public housing, [click here](#).

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