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## U.S.

### Increasingly, Smoking Indoors Is Forbidden at Public Housing



Craig Dilger for The New York Times

Residents at Franklin Towers, a public housing high-rise in Portland, Me., obeying a requirement that they smoke outdoors. On Jan. 1, Maine will become the first state where all public housing authorities will have banned smoking.

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By KATHARINE Q. SEELYE  
Published: December 18, 2011

AUBURN, Me. - Glenys Cushman was grabbing a quick cigarette here the other day outside her federally subsidized apartment. The rules say no smoking inside or within 25 feet of the entrance, and though she hates having to go outside, she has come to accept it.

"My neighbor is on oxygen," said Ms. Cushman, 53, who is on disability herself. "And I can't quit. I tried. I get too worked up without smoking. So I come out here."

In 2004, the Auburn Housing Authority became the first authority in Maine and one of the first in the country to ban smoking in public housing, and it has served as a model. On Jan. 1, Maine will become the first state in the country in which all of its public housing authorities are smoke free, affecting about 12,000 tenants.

Similar policies are being adopted with increasing frequency across the country as cities move aggressively to restrict smoking in more public places, from bars and restaurants to parks, beaches and vehicles. Come September, Boston will become the biggest city to ban smoking in its public housing, which serves about 25,000 tenants. Detroit, San Antonio and Portland, Ore., already have similar restrictions in place.

The bans are largely a response to the risks posed to nonsmokers by secondhand smoke. In

addition, property managers say smokeless apartments are cheaper to clean, especially if there is carpeting, and reduce the risk of fire.

Depending on who is asked, banning smoking in public housing is either an effective way to promote healthier living, as many officials and nonsmokers contend, or a violation of individual liberties, as some tenants argue. But after several years of such bans, the objections have gained no legal traction. Smokers are not perceived as a protected class, and civil liberties groups and legal aid societies say they tend not to defend such cases.

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