

End to smoking good thing for SRHA

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Smoking in Suffolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority-owned buildings will soon be a thing of the past, and that's a good thing.

A new policy will go into effect Aug. 1 in order to comply with federal regulations. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development adopted its Smoke-Free Housing Rule several years ago and gave all housing authorities across the country until Aug. 1, 2018, to comply.

Since that time, SRHA has been promoting the upcoming change, offering smoking cessation classes to residents and designating outdoor smoking areas at all five of its properties.

We believe SRHA should go one step farther than the HUD regulation, though, and disallow smoking anywhere on its properties, even outdoors.

We're glad the policy is going into effect soon, but it's hard to believe that this wasn't a local policy before the federal government mandated it.

Smoking damages buildings and poses a fire hazard, and for these reasons alone, many private apartment complexes prohibit it. In addition, it is dangerous for the health of smokers and innocent victims around them.

Multiple studies have shown that smoking and its health effects disproportionately affect low-income individuals, and low-income individuals are also more likely to be exposed to secondhand smoke.

According to anti-tobacco organization Truth Initiative, tobacco use is more prevalent in low-income neighborhoods, in part because tobacco marketing is more prevalent.

Almost a third of regular tobacco users earn less than \$20,000 a year and do not have a high school diploma, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

About 42 percent of unemployed adults and nearly three-quarters of homeless adults use tobacco. Low-income tobacco users are also especially hard hit by the effects of tobacco use, such as lung cancer, particularly because they are less likely to get regular screenings or be able to afford the best treatments. In short, tobacco use is a scourge of American society that mostly affects those who are most marginalized in our society.

SRHA employs numerous people who cut the grass and make repairs at its properties and provide services to residents that include workforce training and financial classes. But by allowing smoking in their properties to continue for this long, Suffolk Redevelopment and Housing Authority failed in its duty to protect its properties and to help promote the physical and financial well-being of its residents.

Fortunately, for once, the federal government knew better.