



ADVICE NOTE

SMOKE FREE REGULATIONS

A guide to the smoking ban in blocks of flats



Note:

As the leading trade body for residential leasehold management, ARMA is also an important resource for leaseholders. Our Advice Notes cover a range of topics on the leasehold system to help leaseholders understand their rights and responsibilities and ultimately get the most out of living in their flat.

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AT A GLANCE

Since 2007, the internal communal areas of block of flats must be smoke-free by law. Residents who smoke in the internal communal areas can be prosecuted by the local authority and fined up to £200.

No-smoking signs should be placed in all internal communal areas. There are different regulations about signage for England and Wales but it's an offence not to display the signs.

Whether or not you agree with the smoke-free law, your landlord and managing agent have a duty to prevent anyone from smoking in the communal parts of your block. If they don't, they can be fined.

IF YOU SMOKE INSIDE
COMMUNAL AREAS,
YOU COULD BE FINED
UP TO £200 BY THE
LOCAL AUTHORITY!

THE IMPACT ON BLOCKS OF FLATS

Enclosed communal areas of blocks of flats are designated smoke-free premises. Even external porches that are less than 50% open sided must be smoke-free.

Residents' Management Companies (RMCs), landlords or their agents must display no-smoking signs that meet the regulations.

If your block of flats has an office for onsite staff (a porter for example), then that must also be kept smoke-free. Likewise, smoking should not be permitted in any storeroom, boiler room or meter cupboard.

THE IMPACT ON FLAT OWNERS

Individual flats are exempt from the regulations. They don't prevent leaseholders from smoking in the privacy of their own homes. But they must not smoke in the internal communal areas — it's against the law.

So if you're a smoker, you should put your cigarette out at the front entrance of the building if you don't do so already. If you smoke inside the communal areas, you could be fined up to £200 by the local authority.

If you continue to smoke in the communal areas of the block your landlord, RMC directors or your managing agent have to ask you to stop. It's not that they're necessarily anti-smoking, or picking on you personally, but the law puts a duty on them to challenge smokers. If they don't, they can be fined up to £2,500.

Also bear in mind as a smoker that if you want a member of the onsite team or your managing agent to visit you in your home, the law puts a duty on their employer to consider their health and safety from smoke. So some companies may adopt a policy where employees can refuse to visit or work in a flat where the resident smokes.

SIGNAGE REQUIREMENTS IN WALES

All smoke-free premises must display prescribed signs. The minimum size of the sign and wording is set out in law. The no-smoking sign for each entrance to a blocks of flats or office must:

- Be in a prominent position
- Be at least A5 size in area
- Display the international no-smoking symbol in colour at a minimum of 70mm (3 inches) in diameter
- Carry the following words that can easily be read: **“No Smoking. It is against the law to smoke in these premises.”** (Alternatively the words “these premises” can be changed to refer to something more specific like ‘in communal parts of this building’ or ‘in this doorway’).

If there’s a room or office in the block for onsite staff (like a porter’s office), then the sign can simply be the no-smoking symbol in colour at a minimum diameter of 70mm (assuming the main entrance of the building has the larger sign described above).

Your ARMA agent can advise you where to get the signs from.

SIGNAGE REQUIREMENTS IN ENGLAND

From 1st October 2012 the requirements for No Smoking signs in England were relaxed.

It’s still a legal duty to display at least one sign in smoke-free premises and vehicles, but there will be discretion for their design and location.

ENFORCEMENT AND PENALTIES

Local authority environmental health officers enforce the smoke-free regulations. They can issue the following penalties:

- Failing to display a no smoking sign: fine of up to £1,000 or a fixed penalty notice of £200 served on the landlord, RMC or their agent
- Failing to prevent smoking in a smoke-free place: fine of up to £2,500 on the landlord, Resident Management Company, landlord or their agent.
- Smoking in a smoke-free place: fine of up to £200 or a fixed penalty of £50, discounted to £30 for early payment, served on the resident caught smoking in the internal communal areas.

FINAL WORD

Just because a block of flats is a residential building, it doesn't mean it's exempt from the smoking ban. Landlords, managing agents and RMC directors all have a duty to prevent smoking in the communal areas of your block. For properties that suffer from persistent smoking in enclosed public spaces, it should be a comfort to know there are ways of directly tackling the problem.



FURTHER INFORMATION

Here's a summary of the smoke-free Regulations:

- **The Smoke-free (Premises and Enforcement) Regulations 2006 SI 3368**
- **The Smoke-free (Penalties and Discounted Amounts) Regulations 2007 SI 764**
- **The Smoke-free (Exemptions and Vehicles) Regulations 2007 SI 765**
- **The Smoke-free (Vehicle Operators and Penalty Notices) Regulations SI 760**
- **The Smoke-free (Signs) Regulations 2012 SI 1536**

To read them in detail visit: legislation.gov.uk

For guidance on the smoke-free law in Wales visit: wales.gov.uk

**The Association of
Residential Managing
Agents Ltd**

**178 Battersea Park Road
London SW11 4ND**

Telephone 020 7978 2607

info@arma.org.uk
www.arma.org.uk

Note:

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