


Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
**DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING &  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Deval L. Patrick, Governor ♦ Timothy P. Murray, Lt. Governor ♦ Aaron Gornstein, Undersecretary

**PUBLIC HOUSING NOTICE 2012-15**

To: All Local Housing Authority Executive Directors

From:  Lizbeth Heyer, Associate Director, Division of Public Housing & Rental Assistance

Subject: Safety Tips for Home Medical Oxygen Users

Date: October 31, 2012

---

Here it is the end of October, but I did not want it to pass without recognizing that it is National Fire Prevention Safety month. In our effort to raise awareness and preparedness of your residents and staff alike, I'd like to share some safety tips for home medical oxygen use. We have seen over the past decade an increased use of home oxygen systems and we unfortunately have witnessed both the devastating loss of life and the destruction of property within our program.

Oxygen itself does not burn, but a fire needs oxygen to start and to keep burning. When oxygen is in the air, the fire will burn hotter and faster. There should be no smoking allowed in a home where medical oxygen is present. Even if oxygen is not being used, but is present, it may have saturated the home including clothing, curtains, furniture, bedding, hair, and anything in the area.

We offer the following safety tips for the safety of all tenants in state-aided public housing and to protect the property. Please share this information with tenants and staff.

- Tenants should not allow smoking in their home where oxygen is used.
- Tenants should post "No smoking" signs in and outside of the home as a reminder not to smoke due to the use of oxygen.
- No one should ever use an open flame, such as candles, matches, gas stoves, wood stoves, and sparking toys, when oxygen is in use.
- People who may have difficulty escaping a fire should have a phone near their bed or chair.
- Tenants must never tamper with the smoke detector. Tenants must not remove the smoke detectors or the batteries. Testing of the smoke detector should be part of the LHAs move-in, annual, and move-out inspection program.

- Tenants should establish a plan of escape out of their unit and the building. They should plan for two ways out of every room and an outside meeting place. Practicing the routes in and out of the unit are recommended.

If a tenant notifies the LHA that oxygen is in use in their apartment, please provide these safety tips to them individually. Once the LHA has been notified if there is a gas stove in the unit the LHA must replace it with an electric stove.

If you have any questions on this issue, please contact your housing management specialist. Thank you for your continuing efforts to keep residents and property safe.