

# Condominium Home Owners' Association

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Bulletin: 300-257

## Condo Smarts

Headline: Smells, cold from failed hallway pressure system

Topic: Maintenance

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**Condo Smarts:** We have a growing problem in our wood-frame building in New Westminster. We have noticed that at dinner time, we are smelling everyone else's cooking, and our once warm hallways are freezing cold.

This has never been a problem over the past 10 years, but our residents are complaining constantly. We have tried to investigate the building system, and the only change we can identify is an owner who enclosed their patio in glass. Is this a common problem in buildings as they age?

-- *Strata Council, Emerald Greens.*

**Dear Emerald Greens Council:** What you have is a failure of your hallway pressurization system. It delivers pressurized fresh air, normally from the roof area into the common-area hallways and entry.

During the winter months, the unit has a heater to regulate the temperature in the hallways, but hallway pressurization systems, if they are maintained and operated properly, contribute much more to your strata.

They maintain a positive pressure in hallways that reduces and, in many cases, eliminates cooking odours and cigarette smoke from travelling beyond the suites.

The system also brings fresh, circulated air into the building that reduces condensation and mould in common areas and prevents elevators from creating a chimney effect from parking garages that could exhaust emissions up into the living spaces.

In the event of fire, the pressurization is also instrumental in reducing smoke infiltration into the hallways, increasing safe exit and reducing building damages.

Both the strata corporation and owners have a responsibility to ensure the system operates. The strata council must maintain and repair the system, including changing of filters and maintenance of the heating and cooling units.

These systems are generally designed to operate 24 hours a day and the strata will gain little benefit if they only operate in peak hours of demand.

Make sure the maintenance and servicing of your pressurization system is an annual budget item so your strata can meet their obligations. And owners must ensure their door sweeps are not completely blocked to allow the pressurized air to circulate.

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