

Common Housing Problems

1. I have cockroaches in my unit.

Prevention: The life span of the common cockroach is about 25 days, which makes this insect difficult to combat. Cockroaches live in dark confined spaces including piles of clothing, plastic or paper bags, between kitchen shelves and the wall, behind and around refrigerators and under the kitchen sink.

To prevent cockroaches, do not collect the following:

- ✓ Newspapers
- ✓ Plastic bags or paper grocery sacks
- ✓ Recyclables

Remove food sources by keeping the kitchen trashcan tightly sealed and emptying it every day. Keep the stove, kitchen floor and kitchen shelves clean. If you eat food in areas beside the kitchen, clean carefully when you are done. Keep clothing off the floor and remove clutter. Report plumbing leaks.

Responsibility: Extermination is the responsibility of the property owner. Units should be exterminated every 25 days at least three times in a row to prevent the roach eggs from becoming egg-bearing adults. Notify the property manager or landlord immediately if you have a roach problem

2. I have rodents in my unit.

Prevention: The way to prevent rodent problems is to prevent their access to your unit. This consists of good fitting foundation vent screens, cutting back trees and shrubs from the roof areas, and making sure exterior door clearances tighter than one quarter of an inch. Prevent rodents from finding shelter in your unit by removing clutter, keeping food scraps and particles from accumulating on floor or counter tops, and fixing plumbing and faucet leaks. Keeping pet food off the floor, other than at feeding time, is an excellent preventive.

Responsibility: Rodent removal is the responsibility of the property owner. Contact your local Health Department; some offer free rat/mouse bait and other do-it-yourself pest eradication resources. Otherwise, notify the property manager or landlord immediately if you have a rodent problem.

3. My carpet is filthy – will the landlord clean it?

Prevention: When a unit is rented, make sure the carpeting is to your liking. If you are not happy with the carpet, take care of the problem before moving into the unit. Health Departments who conduct health and safety inspections on properties will typically only write notices (of violation) on carpeting that is threadbare and unserviceable.

Responsibility: The cleaning and care of the carpeting is the responsibility of the tenant.

4. There is a trash problem at our property.

Prevention: There must be adequate trash facilities to handle the trash load of the tenants on a calendar week basis. Due to life styles or the amount of persons in a complex, the amount of trash may vary. Taking your trash out on a daily basis will give the manager/owner a sense of the size of the trash facilities needed to handle the complex. To keep the trash collection area as clean as possible, make sure your trash is bagged in plastic.

Responsibility: Excess trash accumulation is the responsibility of the owner. Notify the property manager or landlord immediately if you have excessive trash outside your unit.

5. I have a plumbing leak under my sink.

Responsibility: Plumbing leaks are the responsibility of the owner. Notify the property manager or landlord immediately if you have a leak. Plumbing leaks may not seem like a big problem, but over time, a leak will destroy walls and wood, including floors and subflooring. A leak is a good source of water for insects and rodents.

6. I have a roof leak.

Responsibility: Roof leaks are the responsibility of the owner. Notify the property manager or landlord immediately if you have a leak. Early notification will help stop further damage to ceilings, walls, flooring, and possibly adjoining units.

7. My apartment heater does not work.

Responsibility: Heater repairs are the responsibility of the owner. Notify the property manager or landlord before cold season arrives if your heater does not work.

Warning: Keep your heater free from dirt and dust. Keep clutter and furniture away from a working heater. Do not use your kitchen stove/burners as a heater. Stove burners will not work efficiently as a unit heater and can give off carbon monoxide that will immediately affect your health. **NEVER USE A CHARCOAL GRILL TO HEAT INDOORS.**

8. I have a leak in my bathroom ceiling.

Cause: Bathroom ceiling leaks usually happen on the first floor units with units above them. This is the first sign that there is a problem in the plumbing from above or that a bathtub or shower is being used improperly.

Responsibility: Bathroom ceiling leaks are the responsibility of the owner. Notify the property manager or landlord immediately if you have a bathroom ceiling leak.

9. My toilet base is loose.

Responsibility: Loose toilet bases are the responsibility of the owner. Notify the property manager or landlord immediately if you have a loose toilet base. This is usually a very easy repair if it is attended to when the problem first occurs. Loose toilet bases can cause the toilet to not flush properly, and cause leakage into the unit below.

10. My windows will not open or they let in drafts.

Prevention: Make sure the windows open, stay open and close before you rent an apartment. Openable windows must be openable and stay open when required. Older apartment units may have wooden windows with loose clearances, which will let in drafts and cold air during the winter.

Responsibility: Windows are designed to open but do not, that do not stay open stay open or do not close properly are the responsibility of the owner.

11. The screens on my windows are in poor condition.

Prevention: Before you rent a unit make sure all openable windows have screens in good repair. Units that use a sliding door for light and ventilation must include a screen with the sliding door. Entry doors are not required to have screens.

Responsibility: It is the responsibility of the owner to ensure that all windows and sliding doors used for light and ventilation have screens in good repair.

12. There is overgrown vegetation on the property where I live.

Responsibility: It is the responsibility of the owner to ensure that the property is kept free of overgrown vegetation. This vegetation is a great place for rats and rodents to live. Vegetation growing on the side of the building or on the roof will accelerate the damage to the exterior or the roof.

13. The stairways are in poor condition.

Responsibility: It is the responsibility of the owner to maintain stairs properly. Improperly maintained stairs are a tripping hazard. Notify the manager/owner of any stair problems to prevent potential injury.

14. There is someone living in the garage.

Responsibility: Contact the local Code Enforcement office to report a garage being used as a living area. A garage is not an approved living space.

15. There are inoperable vehicles at the property where I live.

Prevention: If you own a vehicle, make sure it is currently registered and in good repair.

Responsibility: Contact the local Code Enforcement office to report an inoperable/abandoned vehicle.

16. The roof and drain gutters are in bad shape.

Prevention: Roof and drain gutters need to be cleaned annually before the rainy season. This allows easy drain off of the roof areas. Also check the roof areas for accumulation of debris and dead foliage that may prevent the roof from adequately draining.

Responsibility: It is the responsibility of the owner to maintain and repair roof and drain gutters.

17. The foundation vents are deteriorated.

Prevention: Foundation vents constructed of quarter inch hardware mesh are required to keep out rodents.

Responsibility: It is the responsibility of the owner to maintain foundation vents.

18. There is a flea problem at the property.

Prevention: When weather temperatures of 80 degrees or above occur, fleas increase their reproductive cycle. If you own a dog or a cat, take precautionary measures to prevent the animal from being the focal point of the problem.

Responsibility: It is the responsibility of the owner to exterminate fleas from your unit if you do not keep pets.

19. We have no water at the property.

Responsibility: It is the responsibility of the owner to make sure the units have water. Notify the local Code Enforcement office immediately if your water is turned off unless it is obvious that someone is working on the plumbing. When water is cut off because of non-payment of the utility bill by the property owner, Code Enforcement may request a five-day emergency turn-on as long as two or more units at the complex are occupied. The owner of record will be notified and directed to immediately restore the water service. If the owner fails to comply, the tenants may have the water service permanently restored by putting the water

service in their name and paying the water bill themselves. Find out what your rights are by calling your local Fair Housing counseling agency.

20. There is clogged plumbing.

Responsibility: Clogged plumbing is the responsibility of the property owner. Let the property manager/owner know of any problems as soon as they happen. If the problem isn't taken care of, call the local Code Enforcement office. Clogged/unusable plumbing is considered an immediate health threat and is typically treated as a serious problem by Code Enforcement Inspectors.

21. There are animal feces on the property.

Prevention: People who own pets have a responsibility to clean up after their animals daily and dispose of the feces in a sanitary manner (either in a sealed bag in the trash container or flushed down the toilet). If there is a problem with wild cats, take precautions to eliminate food and water sources. Keep lids on trash containers and pet food confined only to periods when your pet eats. Traps may be available from your local Animal Control to be used to remove wild animals. (Please note: a deposit is typically required to obtain a trap.)

Responsibility: It is the responsibility of the property owner to maintain the units free from animal feces.

22. The building needs painting.

Responsibility: It is the responsibility of the property owner to maintain the exterior of the property, including the paint. Exterior paint in poor condition may lead to excess moisture entering the units, causing mold and mildew on interior walls.

23. There is a mold problem in my unit.

Prevention: Mold can become a problem in the home through flooding, leaky roofs, humidifiers, damp crawl spaces, plumbing leaks, steam from cooking, inadequate ventilation, overcrowding, shower/bath steam/leaks, and combustion appliances. Reducing moisture can prevent mold growth. Venting the bathroom when using the shower/bath is a must. Clean the bathroom on a routine basis. A good cleaning solution is made up of 10% household bleach in water. (About one and a half cups of household bleach to a gallon of water will be effective.) **DON'T MIX A BLEACH SOLUTION WITH AMMONIA.** If at all possible, avoid spraying the bleach solution: apply it to moldy areas with a cloth or sponge. Let the cleaned areas dry naturally for at least 30 minutes, as this time is needed to kill the mold.

Responsibility: Other than small amounts of mold in the bathtub/ shower area, (safe) mold removal is the responsibility of the property owner. Let your property manager/owner know if there is extensive mold growth to prevent further damage to the unit and possible damage to your health.

24. Our complex has a swimming pool or spa that is not operating correctly.

Responsibility: Pools and spas that do not operate correctly, as well as other pool-related safety issues, are the responsibility of the owner. Let your property manager/owner know of the problem to prevent illness or injury to unsuspecting pool/spa users.

25. There are swarming bees on my property and in my neighborhood.

Prevention: It is (usually) illegal to maintain beehives on residential property; check with your local Code Enforcement or Health Department office to verify. If you know someone keeping bees in a hive, in a residential area, call the local Health Department.

Responsibility: 1. If the problem occurs on City owned property, call the Health Department and a Vector Control Specialist should be able to address the problem. 2. Bee problems on private property are the

responsibility of the owner. After regular business hours and on weekends, it is recommended to report bee swarms to local Fire Department by calling 911.

26. There is a terrible problem with pigeons in my neighborhood.

Prevention: Pigeons can be a problem only when conditions are attractive to them. Avoid feeding pigeons. Keep trash and debris cleaned up around the property and lids on trash containers. Keep attic vents screened to prevent harborage in these areas. Keep pet food confined to the interior of your unit. If you are feeding other birds, make sure this is not becoming an attractive nuisance to the pigeon population.

Responsibility: Residents may keep and raise pigeons by meeting distance requirements of not less than fifty feet from the owner's dwelling and not less than fifty feet from any other dwelling, and not less than one hundred feet from a multiple-unit dwelling (verify this with local Health Department and/or Code Enforcement). Typically, a Health Permit is required. Contact the Health Department if you think a neighbor is in violation of these conditions.

Miscellaneous:

❖ **I have a difficult time communicating with the owner or manager of my housing complex. I have a problem communicating with my tenant.**

Your local City or County gov't may offer Dispute Resolution Services free of charge. This allows the parties to come together on neutral ground and discuss any problems they may have with one another in the presence of a neutral party who will assist in resolving the problems.

❖ **What more I can do to help my neighborhood?**

Call your local City or County Neighborhood Community Services Department. You may be able to obtain information on various community groups, community cleanup groups, and grants on community help projects.