



# HOW TO REPORT SUSPECTED HOUSING VIOLATIONS

Dear D.C. Resident:

The D.C. Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) has prepared this informational sheet to ensure your buildings and your units are healthy and safe. DCRA needs you, the tenant, to report your suspected housing violations to the property manager directly. If the issues are not addressed or resolved within ten days, then you need to report your complaint directly to DCRA or the Office of the Tenant Advocate (OTA) to schedule an inspection.

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If you feel your apartment or building does not comply with the standards as outlined on the following page, you should take the following steps to identify necessary repairs:

**1.** Write out a list of code violations using the Housing Code Standards in this section or the more detailed regulations in Title 14 of the D.C. Municipal Regulations to determine what must be repaired. Make one list of violations for your apartment and another list of violations for common areas such as the hallways, stairs, yard, etc. Sign and date any lists you make.

Preserve physical evidence of violations (including photographs of dead insects, rats, or mice) to show to the D.C. housing inspector. Try to bring a witness with you for complaints.

**2.** All requests for repairs should be sent in writing to the landlord, resident manager, or rental office asking them to make the repairs. Keep a copy of every letter or note you write and make a list of all calls, letters, and meetings along with the date and time they occurred.

When calling the landlord, make certain you obtain the name of the person who takes your complaint. Keep a calendar or other written notes which include when the problems started, when the landlord was contacted, what was done in response to the complaint, and when and if the repairs were completed. Send the letters certified mail, return receipt, and/or obtain a receipt from the landlord for delivery of letters, if possible.

**3.** If you receive no response to your complaint or the repairs are not made, invite the landlord or resident manager to meet with you or the tenant organization to discuss the violations and repairs.

**4.** If management still does not respond, you should request a housing inspection by calling or writing the Housing Inspection Section of the D.C. Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, 941 North Capitol Street NE, Washington, D.C. 20002, or **(202) 442-9557**. You can also request an inspection via email at [dcra.housingcomplaints@dc.gov](mailto:dcra.housingcomplaints@dc.gov). Please include name, phone number and summary of your issues.

An inspection will usually be scheduled within a week but an inspector can respond sooner in emergencies. Remember to keep a copy of every letter or note and make a list of all calls, letters, and meetings along with the date and time they occurred.

If you feel you have a violation that requires immediate attention, contact the Mayor's Call Center by dialing **311** and you will be connected to an DCRA On-Duty Inspector. For emergencies, dial **911**.

FOR MORE DETAILED INFORMATION, VISIT [dcra.dc.gov](http://dcra.dc.gov) OR [ota.dc.gov](http://ota.dc.gov)



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## DC HOUSING CODE STANDARDS

District of Columbia laws require your landlord to provide apartments that are in a safe, habitable and livable condition. The landlord has a duty to make all repairs necessary to make buildings and apartments habitable. A copy of the D.C. Housing Code is available on our website. D.C. law also requires landlords to maintain buildings and apartments according to many established standards, including the Housing Code Standards listed below.

### “INSIDE THE APARTMENT”

**Bathrooms:** A bathroom must be private and ventilated, it must have a bathtub or shower, toilet, sink with hot (at least 120 degrees) and cold running water, and it must have a waterproof floor and wall base.

**Cleanliness:** Apartments must be free of insects, rats, and mice. Apartments must also be free of dirt, dust, cobwebs, garbage, and litter at the time of move-in. Tenants are responsible for keeping their apartments clean after they move in.

**Insects:** Insects such as roaches, ants, water bugs, etc. are prohibited.

**Doors:** Doors must not be blocked, must open and close easily (particularly emergency exits and fire doors), and must fit reasonably well within their frame. Knobs and locks must be in good working condition.

**Electricity:** Each apartment or house must have two separate electrical outlets per habitable room (one of which must be a wall or floor convenience outlet), wires with good insulation, and correct fuses.

**Fire Safety:** Lighted fire exit signs, fire extinguishers, and a fire alarm system.

**Floors:** Floors must be clean, sound, waterproof, and level. Cracks, holes, splinters, and rat or mouse holes are prohibited.

**Heat:** If a tenant cannot control heat settings within the unit, the landlord must insure heating equipment maintains the temperature at least 68 degrees Fahrenheit during the day and 65 degrees Fahrenheit at night in all occupied rooms and bathrooms.

**Hot Water:** Water temperature must reach 120 degrees Fahrenheit in the kitchen and bathroom.

**Kitchens:** All facilities provided by the landlord for cooking, storage, or refrigeration of food must be maintained in a safe and good working condition. The kitchen sink must have hot and cold running water.

**Paint:** Paint must not be peeling or flaking and must not contain exposed lead paint.

**Plumbing:** Leaky plumbing is prohibited. Each apartment must have hot and cold running water in the kitchen and bathroom.

**Privacy:** Each apartment must have a door to an outside hallway or the street. Bathrooms must permit privacy; tenants must be able to get to the bathroom and bedrooms without going through another bathroom or bedroom.

**Security:** Tenants must be able to lock the apartment from both the outside and inside. Building entrances must have locks.

**Space:** At least 70 square feet is required for each room used for sleeping by one tenant over 1 year old. For rooms used by 2 or more tenants for sleeping, there must be at least 50 square feet for each tenant. Under the D.C. Human Rights Act (not the Housing Code), it may be considered unlawful discrimination if a landlord tries to evict a family with children in order to limit the number of tenants living in the apartment. For purposes of the Human Rights Act, in general up to 2 persons are allowed in an efficiency, 3 persons in a one bedroom, 5 persons in a two bedroom, and 7 persons in a three bedroom.

**Stairs:** Stairs must be firm and secure with good railings and good lighting. Obstructions are prohibited.

**Walls And Ceilings:** Holes, wide cracks, or peeling paint, plaster, or wallpaper is prohibited.

**Windows:** Windows must have screens from March 15 to November 15. Windows must open and close easily, must contain glass without cracks or holes, and must be without air or water leaks.

### “OUTSIDE THE APARTMENT”

**Cleanliness:** All walks must be free of dirt, garbage, litter, rats, mice, and insects. The grass must be cut.

**Foundation:** The foundation must have sound joints between the bricks and stones. Holes and cracks are prohibited.

**Porches:** Porches must have safe and secure floors and railings.

**Roof:** The roof must have gutters, drains, and down spouts that do not leak. Roof leaks are prohibited.

**Stairs And Steps:** Stairs and steps must be evenly spaced with railings. Tripping hazards or obstructions are prohibited.

**Trash:** Waterproof plastic or metal covered trash cans must be provided. Grounds and walks must be free of junk, trash, and litter.

**Walkways:** Walkways must be free of obstructions and trash. Holes in the sidewalk are not permitted.

**Walls:** Walls must be waterproof and clean. Holes, cracks, and mouse or rat holes are not permitted.

**Water:** Flooding in yards, walks, basements as well as damp walls and floors are not permitted.