

# A Tenant's Guide to the Public Housing Program



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EQUAL HOUSING  
OPPORTUNITY

# **PUBLIC HOUSING PROGRAM TENANT GUIDE**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Your home was designed with your well being in mind. Every effort has been made to provide you with safe, convenient, comfortable and efficient facilities. As a resident, you have the responsibility for caring for your home and the areas around it. Whenever you require assistance in your efforts, please contact the Housing Authority's representatives and they will help you.

We have provided this handbook to answer the most frequently asked questions, however, it does not include all matters which concern our mutual obligations. We recommend that you consult your Lease for specific details, and do not hesitate to ask our management personnel whenever you have any questions.

Please remember that a neighborhood environment is created by its residents. The ordinary rules of conduct that govern the average citizen are applicable. Your consideration for the rights of your neighbors and cooperation with the Housing Authority will result in a pleasant relationship for everyone.

## **2. WHAT YOU MAY EXPECT FROM THE HOUSING AUTHORITY**

- ✓ To sign a Lease with you which sets forth what you and the Housing Authority agree to do while you are a resident.
- ✓ To supply you with utilities as specified in the Lease.
- ✓ To review and verify your income and family size annually.
- ✓ To adjust your rent in accordance with verified changes in family income.
- ✓ To make repairs and improvements when required.
- ✓ To cooperate with other agencies which offer health, recreational, educational or other beneficial services to the residents.
- ✓ To counsel with residents on solving special problems.

### **3. WHAT THE HOUSING AUTHORITY EXPECTS FROM YOU**

- ✓ To accept the requirements and responsibilities of the Lease. Put no faith in rumors! Check with a Housing Authority office for accurate facts. Visit the Stevens Towers office if you do not understand your Lease or conditions of occupancy.
- ✓ To pay rent on or before the **FIRST** of each month.
- ✓ To respect your neighbors' right to live in peace. Exercise a little effort to control loud radios or TVs, overtime parties, shouting, slamming of doors and unsupervised children.
- ✓ To keep your home and immediate surroundings neat and clean. Mow your lawn regularly, and remove snow or ice from sidewalks when necessary.
- ✓ To report accidents, emergencies and property damage immediately.
- ✓ To use the dwelling equipment carefully and to be careful in the consumption of all utilities.
- ✓ To report immediately any change in family income or size.
- ✓ To assume full responsibility for your children. Don't forget that you will be required to pay for any damage caused by you, your children or your guests.
- ✓ To NEVER allow unauthorized boarders, lodgers or long term guests to stay in your dwelling.
- ✓ To provide the required 30-day written notice before you move and to take all of your belongings with you when you leave. Remember, you must provide the Authority with a forwarding address so that your Security Deposit can be returned to you.

### **4. THE LEASE**

The Lease is a formal and legally binding agreement between you, as the Tenant, and the Housing Authority, as the Landlord. It is very important that you read and understand the Lease. If you have a question regarding any of the Lease provisions, please contact our management representatives and they will obtain an answer for you.

### **5. SECURITY DEPOSIT**

In addition to your initial rental payment, a security deposit is required when you sign your Lease. The Authority allows for the payment of the security deposit over time, according to the following schedule: A minimum of \$50.00 due at the time you sign

your lease and one-third of the remaining balance payable each of the next three months.

The security deposit will be returned to you, with interest, within 30 days after you move, provided:

- You do not owe any rent or other costs to the Authority
- You have paid for all damages for which you are responsible
- You have cleaned your dwelling thoroughly, so that there is no extraordinary cleaning to be done after you leave that would involve unusual expense to the Authority and
- You have given us thirty-(30) days notice in writing that you intend to move.

## **6. RENTAL PAYMENTS**

Please remember that rental payments are due on or before the **FIRST** day of each month. If your rent is not paid in full by the fifth day of the month you will be charged a \$5.00 per month late charge. The late charge is payable with the delinquent rent. This charge helps defray the cost of postage and additional staff time related to the collection of late rent payments.

You should also note that the Lease contains a provision for chronic late payment of rent. This means that those tenants who continually pay their rent after the fifth day of the month will face possible eviction action, even though the rent is paid. You should understand that paying your rent late is a serious violation of the Lease.

## **7. REEXAMINATION AND INCOME**

When you signed your lease you were given the choice of paying either a flat amount of rent each month or having the amount of rent you pay based on a percentage of your income. You will also be given the choice to pay the flat or income based rent once each year on your lease anniversary date. If you have decided to pay an income based rent the Housing Authority is required by law to review your family income and family size annually. Once each year you will be required to submit verification of your income or any other circumstances that might affect your residency status.

If you have chosen to pay the flat rent the Housing Authority will only review your family income once every **THREE** years. However, you may request the Authority to review your circumstances at any time. Generally you would ask for a review if you believe you would pay less rent by converting from the flat rent to the income based rent. However, you may only convert from the income based rent to the flat rent on your lease anniversary date.

No matter which rent option you have chosen, ALL TENANTS must report to the Authority any change in family composition WITHIN 10 DAYS. In addition, if your rent is based on your income YOU MUST report any income changes WITHIN 10 DAYS! Failure to report any of the required changes within 10 days is a violation of the Lease and may lead to termination of the Lease, retroactive rent charges and/or criminal action. If you have any doubt as to whether you should report a change CALL your Project Management Office, do not guess!

## **8. INSPECTIONS**

When you move into your new home don't neglect to call your Project Management office promptly to schedule a move-in inspection. A member of the Housing Authority's Management staff will go through your new home with you and mark a checklist with any defects existing in your dwelling at the time of your move-in. This move-in inspection is your protection at move-out time against being unfairly charged for damages not caused during your family's occupancy.

In addition to the move-in inspection the Authority will perform other routine inspections during your tenancy. From time to time members of the Authority's Management and Maintenance staffs will call on you for the purpose of making periodic inspections or performing maintenance. Our Management office will schedule an appointment with you in advance of any inspection.

## **9. FAMILY COMPOSITION AND TRANSFER**

You have been leased a home which accommodates the size and composition of your family. Only those family members who are registered on our records are permitted to reside there. You must report marriages, births, deaths, or any other changes in your family composition to the Occupancy Office. As the size of your family increases or decreases, it may be necessary for you to transfer to a dwelling of appropriate size when it becomes available. If you desire a transfer for some other reason, you may submit a written request to your Project Management office for consideration.

## **10. IF YOU DECIDE TO MOVE**

When you decide to move out, please notify your Project Management office **in writing** at least thirty (30) days in advance of your departure so that your home may be rented promptly to another family in need of housing; a convenient move-out notice form is available from any Authority office. If you do not give us 30 days advance notice in writing, we may have to charge you for 30 days rent, unless the unit is occupied in less time than that, in which case, we charge you for the number of days for which the unit was vacant. When you leave, please clean your home thoroughly; try to leave the unit as you wanted it to look when you moved into it. Here's a quick move-out checklist for you:

- ✓ Give the Authority notice that you intend to move;
- ✓ When you leave, close and lock all doors and windows;
- ✓ Leave your refrigerator plugged in and set at the warmest setting;
- ✓ Leave your house or apartment clean and free of trash;
- ✓ Contact the Management Office to arrange for the return of your keys and to schedule a move-out inspection at least two working days in advance of your departure;
- ✓ After a move-out inspection is completed by the Housing Authority (you may join in the inspection), you will receive a statement of any charges for the repair of damages, outstanding rent, or other charges due.

From the above, it is easy to see that vacating your unit is really serious business and should be given your strict attention. If you have any problems or questions when you are vacating, please call your Project Management Office for help and advice so that you can leave with a clear record.

## **11. REQUEST FOR REPAIRS**

Our maintenance men are good people to know. They are the ones who make the necessary repairs when something leaks, breaks, or is otherwise damaged. Please request their services promptly by contacting your Project Management office to request a work order. An early repair often saves a lot of trouble and expense. The Authority will attempt to provide maintenance services at a time which is convenient for you. However, as per Section 9C of your Lease, you should be aware that your request for maintenance services constitutes permission for Authority personnel to enter your dwelling even if you are not at home. Damage due to normal wear and tear is our responsibility. Damage done by you, your family, or your visitors is your responsibility and you will be charged for it.

## **12. MAINTENANCE EMERGENCIES**

Maintenance emergencies include gas leaks, failure of water pumps during heavy rainfall, broken sewer pipes, loss of heat in winter, serious damage to roofs as a result of storms, any failure of lights that occurs in more than one home, or any other situation that is dangerous to life, health or property. If any of these situations arises during office hours, call your Project Management office immediately to make repairs. If the office is closed, call 274-1403 for 24-hour emergency maintenance.

**All emergencies and accidents that occur in your home or in the development should be reported to the Authority promptly. You can report maintenance emergencies 24 hours a day by calling 274-1403.**

### **13. LAWN CARE AND SNOW REMOVAL**

Keeping up the appearance of your neighborhood is a job that you and the management share. Management is responsible for the care of all grounds and sidewalks used by the community as a whole. Your help is requested in seeing that your development never has that “after the picnic” look and that new grass is given a chance to grow. Even if you are not personally responsible for the orange peels, paper, or other kinds of litter that spoil the appearance of a neighborhood, pick them up anyway. After all, this community is your home, and it is to your advantage to see that it looks neat and well cared for at all times. Each tenant is responsible for mowing the grass in his or her own yard and clearing snow and ice from walks promptly in the wintertime. If you have a question about which lawn areas or walkways are your responsibility, please contact our office. Help to keep the area around your home presentable by picking up trash and frequent sweeping. During the grass mowing season, it may be necessary for you to mow the grass at least once a week. During the winter months, ice and snow must be removed from your sidewalks and steps *promptly*. It is your responsibility to have the necessary equipment, such as a lawn mower, grass clippers, snow shovel, etc., to use in caring for the outside of your home.

**A word about trees and shrubbery.** Please try to preserve the trees. They may look small, but they are expensive and we would like to give them a chance to grow into real shade trees. Explain to your children how important it is not to cut the bark, swing on the branches or break them off. Most children don’t realize that young trees die from this kind of treatment, but you may have to pay for the damage. The shrubbery planted by the Authority, like the trees, is to be treated with care. Both shrubs and trees will be trimmed and pruned by specially trained people.

### **14. LOCK-OUT**

If you are one of those people who never forgets his or her keys, don’t read any further. Those of you who do read further, however, will want to know just what can be done to help you get into your homes in case you forgot your key. If you are locked out of your home during normal business hours you should call your Project Management Office. When your project office is closed you should call the 24 hour emergency number 274-1403. A maintenance staff member will be sent to unlock the door for you (you will need to show identification for the door to be unlocked). There will be a charge for this service (including an overtime surcharge for service after normal business hours). Of course you can avoid any charges if you **“Don’t forget your key”**.

## 15. UTILITIES

When you move in, you will be told which utilities (if any) you will be responsible for paying to the utility company and which will be included in your rent. It is the responsibility of every resident not to waste any utility. The following are suggestions will help keep your utility consumption at a responsible level.

- ✓ Turn on only those lights which you need.
- ✓ Do not use higher wattage lamps than you need.
- ✓ Make certain the refrigerator door is closed.
- ✓ Do not use the kitchen range for heating purposes.
- ✓ Keep thermostats at the lowest comfortable setting.
- ✓ Report all dripping faucets, and leaks immediately.
- ✓ Report immediately commodes that do not shut off properly.
- ✓ Do not overload circuits with electric appliances.
- ✓ Keep doors and windows shut in winter.

**Window air conditioners** – Please be aware that the Housing Authority DOES NOT provide air conditioning in any of our family developments or at Washington Arms. Under some circumstances residents are permitted to install their own window air conditioners. You may install a window air conditioner in any room of your home that has at least TWO windows. In other words if the room (such as a bedroom) has only one window, then you MAY NOT install an air conditioner in that room. HUD has very strict requirements that prohibit installation of an air conditioner in any room with only one window. Installation of an air conditioner in any room with only one window is a lease violation that could result in termination of your lease and your eviction.

You also need to be aware that the cost of the additional electricity needed to operate air conditioning is the responsibility of the resident, not the Housing Authority. Electric usage for air conditioning IS NOT included in any monthly utility allowance provided by the Authority.

## 16. TELEPHONES AND CABLE TELEVISION

Telephone installation is optional and all costs become the resident's responsibility. The telephone company must make all installations in conformity with the Housing

Authority regulations. You must obtain permission from the Housing Authority prior to having a telephone installed in any location other than the telephone outlets already located in your apartment.

If cable television is available, connection may be made at the resident's cost. No television or radio antenna or satellite dish may be erected on Housing Authority property.

#### **17. ABSENCE FROM HOME**

If you plan to be absent from your home, even if it's only for twenty-four hours, let us know that your dwelling will be empty. Plumbing has a way of acting up in vacant houses and gas or electricity may require attention. It is also important to know who is on the premises for rescue purposes in the event of a fire or other disaster. You may not allow friends or relatives to use your apartment while you are gone, as your Lease forbids subletting. Also, for elderly tenants, please notify the office in your building so that we will know that you are not ill and we will be able to keep an eye on your apartment for you.

#### **18. NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR PERSONAL PROPERTY**

The Housing Authority and its employees are not responsible for the loss of, or damage to, any personal property of residents, or anyone else, for any cause whatsoever. Although the Housing Authority carries fire and extended coverage insurance and liability insurance in connection with the operation of its housing units, your furniture and any other personal property are not covered, nor is the Housing Authority liable for any injuries due to negligence of residents. Each family is advised to obtain an adequate amount of insurance covering their own personal property and liability. Renter's insurance is a smart and affordable coverage for you to carry.

#### **19. STAT-CHECKS (for elderly only)**

So that we may know you are safely up and about each day, we have installed a "Stat-Check" switch on your mailbox. Each day before the Noon hour, please push the switch to the right so the red area of the switch is covered. If you fail to flip your stat switch on a given day, an employee of the Housing Authority will call you or come to your apartment to check on your well being.

#### **20. BOARDERS AND LODGERS**

When you moved into your new home, you were assigned a dwelling just large enough for your own family. If you were to allow additional people to move into your home, you would be taking away from the space that your family needs in order to be comfortable. In addition, too many people make it hard to keep a dwelling in

good condition. You and your neighbors also deserve to know that persons regularly staying in your development have met the Authority's screening standards.

Therefore, we must insist that you do not take into your home lodgers, boarders, or other persons who are not named on your Lease as members of your household. Failure to comply with this rule would be grounds for an eviction. If you do have someone coming to visit your from outside of the area for a brief stay, they are welcome if you have filled out IN ADVANCE a simple request form available at any Authority office.

## **21. AUTOMOBILES AND PARKING**

Observe the “No Parking” and “Restricted Parking” rules in your neighborhood. Also, no parking, please on lawns.

Family housing units are provided with **one** off-street parking space per unit, which is labeled with your house number. If your household has more than one vehicle, please park it on the street. Unnumbered spaces are for visitor parking. Please remind your guests **never** to park in a space labeled with a neighbor's house number. If you work on your car, be sure to clean up all grease spots, oil or litter, as you will be charged for any clean-up work of this type that has to be performed by our maintenance staff. Repair work involving the raising of your car on jacks or blocks could be dangerous and is prohibited. Only minor repairs may be performed to vehicles while parked in an Authority development. Minor repairs are those that will be completed within the period of one day and that will cause no danger, stain, or damage to any part of the area.

Abandoned, unlicensed, nor non-operating vehicles may remain within the development for no more than forty-eight hours. Abandoned automobiles may be towed away at your expense. An abandoned car is an invitation to children and others to vandalize and often causes personal injury for which you may be held liable.

Although there are off-street parking lots at both Stevens Towers and Washington Arms, space limitations unfortunately prevent us from guaranteeing a parking slot for every tenant. Those with a vehicle will be issued an Authority parking sticker entitling them to use one parking space on their building's lot; there are no assigned spaces for specific tenants. If and when your building's tenant parking reaches capacity, new tenants with vehicles will be placed on a waiting list to receive a parking sticker when the next tenant space becomes available. Please advise your visitors that the Stevens Towers and Washington Arms parking lots are for tenant and staff use only. We know they will be able to find ample parking on surrounding streets.

## 22. ANIMALS

Residents in all public housing developments may keep pets in accordance with the Housing Authority's Pet Policy. Permission must be obtained from the Authority prior to obtaining a pet.

## 23. NO BUSINESS OR ADVERTISING SIGNS

Because our developments are residential properties no one is permitted to operate a business in them unless you have obtained the proper clearance from local officials, as well as advance approval from the Housing Authority. In any event, we ask you not to make billboards of your homes - no advertising signs, please.

## 24. UNDERGROUND UTILITIES

Throughout our family developments, you will see large green metal boxes. These are electrical transformer enclosures. Alongside your home you also see gas and electrical risers protruding from the ground. Do not tamper with these in any way, and do not allow your children to play near them.

You will notice there are no overhead wires in the area. All utilities – gas, electric, television cables, water and sewage are provided by underground facilities. For this reason, **never dig holes or drive stakes, for any purpose.**

## 25. BURGLARY, VANDALISM AND DISTURBANCE OF THE PEACE

These are situations for the police to handle, so they are the ones to call. For Lease violations, also contact the Housing Authority offices. Our goal is to keep your development a place that you can be proud to call home. If you have a problem with a neighbor, please go to him or her and try to talk it out in a neighborly manner; if this approach fails, contact your Project Management Office for advice. Please remember – we can't help solve problems we don't know about!

## 26. HOMEMAKING ADVICE

Since the purpose of government subsidized housing is to give families a decent, safe and sanitary home in which to live, we wish to offer you the following advice on how to maintain your home in a satisfactory manner.

**Cabinets and Countertops:** Cabinet and countertop surfaces should be free of grease and spilled food. Clean with a non-abrasive cleaner and dry immediately. **USE A CUTTING BOARD** whenever you use a knife or any other sharp object which could puncture the countertops. Use a protective pad under hot pans or dishes. Use of a disinfectant type spray cleaner on countertops will reduce the possibility of food borne illness.

**Floors:** Cleaning and waxing your floors **regularly** will keep them in good condition. Tile floors should be cleaned with warm water and mild soap, then rinsed and wiped dry. Use a water emulsion wax for polishing. Other types of wax will ruin the tiles. Use a dry mop to remove dust and dirt between waxings.

Protection under the legs of heavy furniture will reduce the indentations of the floors. **DO NOT USE RUBBER BACKED CARPET** on tile floors. The rubber backing tends to permanently stain the tiles. **DO NOT USE TACKS OR TACK STRIPS** to install carpeting, as these will damage the tiles. If you wish to secure carpeting to the floor do so through the use of double face tape. Carpeting should be vacuumed regularly to keep it looking like new.

**Walls:** Walls should be dusted often and fingerprints and smudges wiped off as soon as possible. Painted surfaces may be washed with a solution of any mild soap, soap flakes, or powder. Do not use strong soaps and powders (except before repainting) as they will destroy the finish. Wallpaper and adhesive backed wall coverings are prohibited.

If you have pictures or other objects to hang on the walls, be sure you exercise care. There are special types of hardware available which will not damage the walls. Do not use paste up hangers, or large nails as these will deface the walls. Please contact the management office if you need advice on hanging a particular item. Remember, you will be charged for any damage to walls when you move out.

**Repainting:** All homes and apartments are freshly painted or touched up before they are rented. If you reside in the same apartment for a number of years, your home will be placed on the Authority's repainting schedule and we will have this work performed for you. Should you want to repaint or retouch you own dwelling, please contact the Management Department at Washington Arms and paint may be supplied to you at no charge. Tenants must paint their homes only with the neutral color paint provided by the Housing Authority.

**Doors and Windows:** Repair of your storm door will be charged to you if it is broken through neglect. Remember to shut your storm door securely at all times so that it will not break away in a high wind.

Make certain that your windows are closed and locked whenever you are going to be away from home. This will prevent your lamps and valuable knickknacks from being blown over and your curtains, rugs, walls and furniture from getting wet.

When you keep your windows closed, such as in the winter, you may notice water running down on the sill. This is caused by the warm moist air inside your home coming in contact with the cold window. This water should be wiped up before it has a chance to ruin the finish of the sills and run down the wall, damaging the plaster.

**Plumbing Fixtures:** A homemaker soon discovers the kitchen sink receives the hardest wear of any of the plumbing fixtures. A gritty scouring powder will scratch the sink surface and once scratched it is often very difficult to keep clean. The newer “soft” scrubbing products are always a good choice.

**Do not pour grease in drains. Place grease in cans for later disposal.** Please do not use any type of drain opener, such as Drano, in clogged plumbing lines. These products contain corrosive chemicals that damage plumbing fixtures and may cause injury to workmen. If your drain is clogged, call the Management Office and Authority maintenance personnel will open the drain for you. There will be a nominal charge for this service, which in most instances will be less expensive than what you would have paid for drain cleaners.

Be sure that faucets are shut off completely after each use, as dripping faucets can waste a large amount of water. If your faucet drips call in a work order promptly. Chrome surfaces should be cleaned only with a damp cloth. Never use any harsh cleansers or polishes as the finish may be destroyed.

**Refrigerator:** Your food will keep better if the inside is cleaned on a regular basis. Wash the interior with warm water to which two tablespoons of borax, or baking soda has been added for each quart of water. Wipe dry with a soft cloth. You may also want to leave an open box of baking soda setting in your refrigerator at all times to prevent odors. Clean the exterior with a damp cloth and wipe dry. Do not use gritty cleansers on the interior or exterior of the refrigerator.

If you have a manual defrost refrigerator, the freezer compartment should never have more than a 1/4" thickness of ice on it. Allow the refrigerator to defrost naturally; you can speed the process by setting a container of hot water in the freezer while it is turned to the defrost setting. **Never attempt to chip off ice in an attempt to speed up defrosting! You can easily puncture the freezer compartment, which will destroy the refrigerator and result in a costly charge to your for replacing the appliance.**

**Range:** Never wash the surface of the range while it is hot. Clean after each meal with a dish cloth. A build-up of grease on the range is a fire hazard and invites roach infestation. Never use oven cleaners anywhere on the range except in the oven. These cleaners contain harsh chemicals which will destroy the finish and trim on the exterior of the range. If you have an electric range, DO NOT use aluminum foil under the burners or to line your oven. If aluminum foil comes in contact with the electric elements they will be severely damaged.

**Never use your range for space heating, it not only wastes utilities, but can also create fire and asphyxiation hazards.**

**Bathtubs and Washbowls:** Clean with warm water and Liquid Comet, Soft Scrub, Lestoil, Mr. Clean or similar products. **DO NOT USE SCOURING POWDER or**

**other abrasive cleaners!** If you have a particularly stubborn stain, use a small amount of dry Spic'n Span on a damp sponge or cloth.

**Toilets:** Wash the tank, bowl, seat and lid with hot soapy water. Scrub the inside of the toilet bowl with a long-handled brush using a product such as Sani-Flush or Vanish. The use of automatic bowl cleaners is discouraged, as they can dislodge, become stuck in the plumbing and thus cause a costly repair.

**Caution:** *NEVER mix together different types of cleaning products! Some cleaning products contain ammonia while others contain chlorine. Mixing these two chemicals together creates a toxic gas, which if inhaled can cause serious injury or even death.*

**Garbage and Trash Removal:** Included in your Lease will be the removal of garbage and refuse by the Authority from the premises. It is important for your health's sake that garbage is removed promptly. Family development tenants will be supplied with a container, for which you are charged. If broken or stolen, you will be charged for a replacement. Be sure to keep your garbage can tightly closed at all times to avoid attracting stray animals or vermin.

If you live in one of our high-rise apartment buildings, there is a garbage chute on each floor. Please drain and wrap all garbage before dropping it in the chute to avoid mess and breakage. We also ask that you dispose of trash only during reasonable hours so the noise does not disturb the tenants of those apartments near the chute.

**Recycling:** Several municipalities in which housing developments are located have local ordinances requiring that residents recycle certain materials. To cooperate with the overall recycling effort and to comply with these local ordinances, the Authority has set up recycling programs at these housing developments. When you rent an apartment at one of these developments you will receive information on the recycling program for that area. If you are not sure whether you are required to recycle or if you have not received information on recycling, please contact your Management Office.

**Hot Water Heater:** If your home has been equipped with an individual hot water heater, you should not attempt to make any adjustments to the heater. If you feel an adjustment is necessary, notify the Management Office. **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD YOU ATTEMPT TO ADJUST THE HOT WATER HEATER.**

**Heating:** You should keep your thermostat(s) set at the lowest comfortable setting (If you live in a development with a locked pre-set thermostat, it must not be tampered with or you could face eviction). You can also reduce your heating costs by keeping radiators and heating ducts free from obstructions. In developments where the furnace is located in your apartment, changing the furnace filters every January, March and November will give you better heating efficiency. If you have a

problem at any time with your heat, please call the Management Office. **YOU SHOULD NEVER ATTEMPT TO ADJUST OR REPAIR YOUR HEATING SYSTEM** as you could be very seriously injured.

**Balconies:** Balconies are provided at some buildings for the enjoyment of all residents. In no case should the balconies be used for storage or for shaking rugs or dust mops.

## **27. BUGS AND PESTS**

There is an old saying that goes: “It’s no disgrace to have bugs, but it is a disgrace to keep them.” The Management Office will offer assistance to any family who suspects that they may be infested with bugs or pests. Exterminators will be called when necessary.

Families who suspect that they may have been subjected to insect infestation at their former address are encouraged to seek the Management’s assistance **before** they move into public housing. Remember to consider your neighbors who will become your new friends.

Bugs and insects can be discouraged by keeping floors and appliances clean of spilled foods, crumbs, and grease. It is your responsibility to keep your home free of infestations; however, the Management Office will be glad to advise and help you. We can also help with ants, bees, wasps, et cetera.

Avoid attracting rats or mice to your neighborhood by picking up litter in your yard and keeping garbage in a tightly closed receptacle at all times. Should you ever spot any vermin, file a work order request with your Project Management office **immediately**.

## **28. FIRE SAFETY INFORMATION**

### **FIRE PREVENTION**

Most fires occur because the public is indifferent toward good fire prevention practices. Seventy percent of the fires that occur in homes and buildings can be attributed to carelessness. These are the needless fires, the kind that can be prevented if each of us takes the time to practice fire safety in the home.

What are the main causes of unnecessary fires? Below are listed seven hazardous situations that could be present in most homes. See how many of these apply to your home; then do something about them.

- ✓ **Careless Smoking Habits:** This is easily the biggest single cause of fatal home fires. Even if no one in your family smokes, chances are some of your guests will. Provide plenty of safe, deep ashtrays, making sure all cigarettes are out

before emptying. Never empty ashtrays into wastebaskets. Make a last minute inspection before going to bed, checking in and around ashtrays. Also check carpeting and furniture around the areas where you know people have been smoking.

Establish a firm "NO SMOKING IN BED" rule. And, even sitting in a chair, it is a good rule never to smoke when you are tired or feel yourself becoming tired while watching TV or reading a book. Be especially alert around people who have over indulged in alcoholic beverages and who are smoking.

- ✓ **Playing With Matches Or Fireworks:** Matches and/or cigarette lighters should be kept in a safe place, away from children. It's an excellent idea to discuss safe use of matches and lighters with your children. Relate this safety with the overall safety of the home and other members of the family. At this same time, review with them your complete program of home fire safety habits. Never allow children to play with fireworks without adult supervision. Even though most dangerous fireworks have been outlawed, the ones still available can easily start fires if not carefully used.
- ✓ **Matches Or Cigarettes Tossed In Rubbish:** Be especially careful of matches or cigarettes while working outside the home. A carelessly tossed match or cigarette can easily start a fire in leaves, grass, or papers or in an area where flammable liquids or material may be stored. Buckets of sand can be placed around the outside of the home to eliminate this hazard.
- ✓ **Combustible Materials:** The best way to eliminate fires caused by combustibles is to eliminate the unnecessary combustibles from your household. Undertake a general housecleaning. Get rid of all unnecessary things that could give fire a place to start, such as greasy or oily rags, paint, wood, paper and other general rubbish. Check your closets and storage areas for all combustibles. Be especially sure that the areas around furnaces and water heaters are keep free from items which could catch fire.

Pay particular attention to aerosol cans and their contents. Store in a safe, cool, dry space. Read and heed the instructions for storage on the can.
- ✓ **Faulty Electrical Appliances:** Make sure that all of the appliances being used in your home are listed by Underwriters Laboratories or other recognized testing firms and that cords and plugs are not frayed or damaged. Never overload a circuit or outlet. The same is even more important for an extension cord. Make sure the extension cord being used is proper for the appliance. Be sure that air conditioners, clothes dryers, washing machines and other major appliances are being used on proper circuits.
- ✓ **Defective Or Overheated Cooking Equipment:** If fire develops on your stove or in a pan, try to smother it with a lid. If this fails, use a dry chemical or carbon

dioxide type fire extinguisher. Baking soda is good for smaller fires. If a fire develops in the oven, turn off the heat and close the door. If the fire does not go out, open the door slowly and use the fire extinguisher. If you have a fire in a pan, NEVER TRY TO CARRY THE PAN OUTSIDE. ALSO NEVER POUR WATER OVER A GREASE FIRE. This will cause spattering and possible spread of the fire. Do not hang items such as pot holders or towels which could catch fire, above your stove - they can help a small cooking fire spread quickly throughout your apartment.

If you detect the least odor of gas, call your local gas company and the Housing Authority immediately and report it. Don't use your stove or oven until the unit has been checked for gas leaks.

- ✓ **Improper Use Of Flammable Liquids:** Careless handling and storage of flammable liquids are major causes of home fires and deaths. Gasoline vapors can travel considerable distance, usually near the floor. Since gasoline burns violently, using it as a fuel or solvent is extremely hazardous. The best rule for using gasoline in a home is DON'T. Make sure it is stored in an approved container in a well-ventilated area where tipping or accidental damage is unlikely - outside the home. And never carry it in your trunk or car. Kerosene, cleaning fluids and other combustibles are not nearly as flammable as gasoline, but should be treated with equal respect.

***ALL HOUSING AUTHORITY RESIDENTS ARE PROHIBITED FROM STORING GASOLINE, KEROSENE OR ANY OTHER COMBUSTIBLE LIQUID ANYWHERE INSIDE THEIR DWELLING. KEROSENE HEATERS ARE NOT ALLOWED. ANY FLAMMABLE LIQUIDS FOUND IN AUTHORITY UNITS WILL BE IMMEDIATELY REMOVED AND TENANTS WILL FACE EVICTION ACTION!***

#### FIRE ESCAPE INSTRUCTIONS FOR HIGHRISE BUILDINGS

- ✓ If the fire alarm is sounded or if a fire starts in your apartment, leave your apartment immediately. If you detect a fire or heavy smoke, but the alarm has not been sounded, pull the interior alarm box next to the exit door.
- ✓ If the fire is not in your apartment, feel the door that leads from your apartment to the corridor before opening it. If it is hot or smoke is seeping in, DO NOT OPEN. If you become trapped in your apartment and cannot reach the fire exit, keep the door closed and stuff a wet towel under the door to prevent smoke infiltration. Use a phone in the apartment to call the Fire Department by dialing 911 and give the address of the building, the floor you are on and the apartment number. Go to a window and try to attract the firemen's attention; however, DO NOT OPEN THE WINDOW EXCEPT AS A LAST RESORT TO GET FRESH AIR.

- ✓ If the door feels cool, open it cautiously. Be braced to slam it shut if the hall is full of smoke or if you feel heat pressure against the door. If the hall is clear, proceed with the escape plan.
- ✓ If you are physically able to use the stairs, leave the building immediately. CLOSE BUT DON'T LOCK the apartment door behind you. Go to the exit stairway designated on the escape plan for your floor (posted on bulletin boards). Quickly knock on your neighbors' doors on the way out.
- ✓ NEVER attempt to go back to your apartment for valuables or other possessions.
- ✓ If your designated exit stairwell is blocked by flames, go to another stairwell. If caught in smoke or heat, stay low where the air is better. Take short breaths (through the nose) until you reach an area of safety.
- ✓ When vacating the building, stay to the right side to allow firemen access to the other side.
- ✓ If you cannot descend the stairs on your own, go into the stairway and wait for emergency personnel to assist you.
- ✓ After you have exited from the building go to a designated area and stay in a group with other residents from the building (if you live in Stevens Towers your designated area is St. John's United Church of Christ, 931 Willow Street). Provide information to emergency personnel about other building residents who are ill, disabled, or absent from the building.
- ✓ **NEVER, NEVER, UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES USE THE ELEVATORS!!!** Elevators will stop if the power fails, causing occupants to become trapped. Elevator shaftways are like chimneys. Smoke could enter the elevator shaft thereby asphyxiating the occupants trying to evacuate the building. In addition, elevator call buttons can be activated by heat. The elevator may stop, and the doors might open, on the floor where the fire is located. *If you use an elevator in a fire you may die!*

### FIRE DRILLS

The purpose of a fire drill is to insure efficient and safe use of the exit facilities available. Proper drills insure orderly evacuation and prevent panic. In all high rise buildings the Housing Authority will conduct periodic drills to remind our residents of the proper emergency procedures to follow as well as to assure that emergency personnel remain familiar with our facilities.

In family dwellings it is the responsibility of each resident to develop a fire escape plan for their home. You should make sure that all members of your family are aware of escape routes from every room, particularly the bedrooms. You should also

make sure that everyone in your home knows how to open all windows and doors. You should instruct family members that speed is of the utmost importance. And, once out of the building, have a pre-planned meeting place to make sure everyone has exited. Don't go back in once you are out.

### SMOKE DETECTORS

Every Housing Authority apartment has been equipped with at least one smoke detector. The smoke detector is possibly the single most important item that can save your life in the event of a fire. If your smoke detector is not operating correctly, please contact the management office and it will be repaired. ***DO NOT REMOVE DETECTORS OR THE BATTERIES. A SMOKE DETECTOR THAT IS NOT WORKING MAY RESULT IN YOUR DEATH OR THE DEATH OF ONE OF YOUR FAMILY MEMBERS! TAMPERING WITH A SMOKE DETECTOR IS A SERIOUS VIOLATION OF YOUR LEASE WHICH MAY RESULT IN EVICTION.***

## **29. LEAD BASED PAINT POISONING**

### INTRODUCTION

People of all ages are subject to lead poisoning, which can be caused by lead in air, water, paint, soil and food. Young children (including the fetus of a pregnant woman) are particularly susceptible to lead poisoning because their bodies and brains are in the developmental stage and because they have a natural tendency to place non-food items in their mouths.

We urge you to read and understand all the information provided so that you become aware of the dangers of lead poisoning and various measures you can take to protect yourself and your children.

### HEALTH EFFECTS OF LEAD POISONING

Lead poisoning is very serious. Some of the symptoms are as follows:

- ✓ Fatigue
- ✓ Loss of appetite and stomach aches
- ✓ Irritability
- ✓ Sleep Disturbance
- ✓ Sudden Behavioral Change
- ✓ Developmental Problems (learning disabilities)

In severe cases, physical symptoms can include clumsiness, weakness, abdominal pain, vomiting, constipation, learning disabilities, brain damage, convulsions, and death. Unfortunately, these symptoms can be caused by other problems as well so it

is important that all children between the ages of 9 months and 6 years have a simple blood test which can reveal a lead poisoning problem.

### LEAD SCREENING PROGRAM

All parents of children between the ages of 9 months and 6 years should have them tested for blood lead levels. This is a simple test is often provided free of charge. Contact the Lebanon County State Health Center at 272-2044 for more information. *The Housing Authority must be notified by you whenever a child residing in an Authority apartment is identified as having an elevated blood lead level.*

### LEAD BASED PAINT POISONING

A major cause of lead poisoning is paint containing lead. Since 1977 household paint must, by regulation, contain no more than 0.06% lead by dry weight. In the past some interior paints contained more than 50% lead.

In any house or apartment constructed prior to 1978, the painted surfaces may contain high levels of lead. If you have young children, you should take special precautions to assure that they do not eat any paint chips or chew on painted surfaces such as window sills, door frames, or railings. Also, since the dust on and around these surfaces may contain lead, they should be cleaned regularly and children's hands should be washed often.

Some of the Housing Authority's apartments constructed prior to 1978 did test positive for the presence of lead in painted surfaces. However, the Authority has taken corrective measures in accordance with regulations of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Of course, children can also ingest lead at other locations, particularly if they are cared for during the day by grandparents, baby sitters or at day care centers. So please share this information with anyone who cares for your young children.

In addition, lead paint may also be on furniture, newsprint, toys, handles, and old cribs. As a precaution you should stop your children from chewing on these objects or on any painted surface.

### SOME LEAD HAZARDS OTHER THAN LEAD PAINT

#### ✓ *INHALED*

- Breathing leaded gasoline fumes.
- Burning: Battery casings, colored newsprint, waste oil, lead painted wood
- Sanding lead based paint surfaces.
- Industrial (smoke stack) emissions.
- Cigarette smoke

✓ *INGESTED*

- Soldered seams of food cans.
- Lead water pipes and lead pipe solder
- Colored newsprint/colored food wrappers.
- Cigarette butts and ashes.
- Household dust.
- Contaminated soil (near busy highways).
- Lead emblems, bullets, weights, sinkers.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

If you have any questions, please contact the Housing Authority or the National Lead Information Center at 1-800-424-LEAD or on the internet at [WWW.EPA.GOV/LEAD](http://WWW.EPA.GOV/LEAD) or [WWW.HUD.GOV/LEAD](http://WWW.HUD.GOV/LEAD).

**30. WHO TO CONTACT**

During your tenancy you will probably find it necessary to contact the Housing Authority. Your central point of contact with the Authority is your Project Manager. Your manager can answer questions about all aspects of your tenancy. Contact numbers for our project offices are listed below.

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Housing Area 1: If you live in Stevens Towers or Washington Arms you should call:

**274-1402, Ext 309 or 312**

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Housing Area 2: If you live on Steckbeck Street, Meily Street, Brock Drive, Cherry Street or Weidman Street you should call:

**389-0620**

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Housing Area 3: If you live on Lafayette Street, Federal Street, South 11<sup>th</sup> Street, Center Street or at Cedar Court you should call:

**274-8466**

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**After Hours Maintenance Emergencies 274-1403**

Call for: After-hours maintenance emergencies when your Project Manager's office is closed.

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**TDD Services****1-800-545-1833 extension 826**

The Authority offers TDD service for all of our deaf residents. You may reach the Authority 24 hours a day through the toll free TDD number.

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**The Internet**

The Authority's web address is: <http://www.lebanoncountyhousing.com>. The web site contains: general information of interest to residents; a collection of Authority policies and forms; and a section listing current events and important announcements. We encourage you to visit the web site on a regular basis.

Email .....info@lebanoncountyhousing.com