

Safe & Habitable Homes


Tenant's Rights & Resources



HOUSING DIVISION

Report a Violation

If you believe there are code violations in your neighborhood, report the violation and Code Enforcement will investigate, generally within two working days.

- [Online](#)
- [Print & Fax/Mail Form](#)
- (619) 691-5280 
- [ACT Chula Vista](#)

[Development Services
Department \(DSD\)
Code Enforcement Division](#)

276 Fourth Avenue
Chula Vista CA 91910
619-585-5681 Fax



A good and safe home can provide a nurturing environment to raise children and contributes to a healthy life for the people who live there. Tenants have the responsibility to keep their home clean. But, they also have the right to live in safe and habitable homes that meet the requirements of California law.

Laws

California housing law and regulations, in conjunction with the Chula Vista Housing Code, define landlords' obligations to make and keep rental homes in a "habitable" condition. Code Enforcement Officers and Building Inspectors of the Development Services Department assure compliance with applicable codes. All residential landlords must follow the codes and repair problems that make the home unfit to live in, or [uninhabitable](#).

Landlord Responsibilities

Property owners are required to provide:

- Building free of lead hazard and mold.
- Safe source of heating systems that maintain a temperature of at least 68°F
- Effective weatherproofing of windows, exterior walls, and roofs, including unbroken windows and doors.
- Clean and sanitary housing free of garbage, waste, rats, vermin, and bedbugs.
- Plumbing and gas facilities in good order, including hot and cold running water.
- Adequate electrical plugs and phone jacks.
- Adequate trash receptacles in good repair.
- Well-maintained stairs, floors, and common areas.



Landlords may not retaliate against tenants who lawfully assert their rights. In addition, California law prohibits landlords from attempting to influence their tenants to move using certain methods (i.e., extortion, threats, menacing conduct, violating right to enter rules). If you feel your landlord is acting unlawfully, you should keep a record of the landlord's activities, request in writing that the landlord stop the unlawful behavior, and consult an attorney or legal services organization if the problem persists. Legal resources can be found at the end of this document.

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Tenant's Responsibilities

Tenants are also required to take reasonable care of their rental units, including common areas such as hallways and outside areas. Tenants are responsible for repair of any damage that results from their neglect or abuse, and for repair of damage caused by their family, guests, or pets.

In general, tenants must do all of the following

- Keep the premises "as clean and sanitary as the condition of the premises permits."
- Use and operate gas, electrical, and plumbing fixtures properly. (Examples of improper use include overloading electrical outlets; flushing large, foreign objects down the toilet; and allowing any gas, electrical, or plumbing fixture to become filthy.)
- Dispose of trash and garbage in a clean and sanitary manner.
- Not destroy, damage, or deface the premises, or allow anyone else to do so.
- Not remove any part of the structure, dwelling unit, facilities, equipment, or appurtenances, or allow anyone else to do so.
- Use the premises as a place to live, and use the rooms for their intended purposes. For example, the bedroom must be used as a bedroom, and not as a kitchen.

When your home needs repairs:

If your home needs repairs, consider taking the following steps:

Step 1: [Notify your landlord or property manager](#): Tell your landlord/property manager about the problems and repairs needed by both a telephone call and in writing. The written letter should include the date and specifically describe the damage or defects and the required repairs. Keep a copy to of the letter to show that notice was given and what it said. If the notice to the landlord was made by e-mail or fax, the tenant should follow up with a letter. The tenant should send the letter to the landlord, manager, or agent by certified mail with return receipt requested. Sending the notice by certified mail is not required, but it's a good idea.

Step 2: Contact the City's Code Enforcement Division: If you get no response to your first letter, or the repair work is not completed by the date you both agreed to and the landlord gives no explanation, write a second letter and let the landlord know that it is a last attempt before seeking other remedies or filing a complaint with the City. If you still do not get a response or receive an acceptable explanation, file your complaint with the Code Enforcement Program.

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When your home needs repairs:

Step 3: [Other Remedies](#): If the landlord doesn't make the requested repairs, and doesn't have a good reason for not doing so, the tenant may have one of several remedies under California law, depending on the seriousness of the repairs. *Tenants should use them carefully and consult with an attorney.*

Resources:

- [California Tenants: A Guide to Residential Tenants' and Landlords' Rights and Responsibilities](#). PDF
California Department of Consumer Affairs. 2012
- [Tenants Legal Center](#) at (858) 571-7100
- [CSA of San Diego County](#) at (800) 954-0441 *English/Spanish Landlord-Tenant Conciliation and Dispute Services*
- [National Conflict Resolution Center](#) at 619-428-3200
- [Legal Aid Society of San Diego](#) at 1-877-534-2524 *English/Spanish*
110 South Euclid, San Diego, CA 92114
Provides legal assistance regarding eviction, housing, and landlord/tenant issues, in addition to other areas of law, to those who qualify. No fees.
- [Lawyer Referral & Info Service of the San Diego Bar Assoc.](#) at (619) 231-0781
Referrals to qualified legal counsel for a free 30 minute consultation.
- [San Diego Volunteer Lawyer Program](#) at (619) 235-5656
225 Broadway, Suite 800, San Diego
Provides free legal services to indigent clients in areas of civil law.
- [University of San Diego – Legal Clinic](#) at 260-7470
5998 Alcalá Park, San Diego 92110
Provides legal services to low-income San Diego County residents.

DISCLAIMER

This bulletin is for informational purposes only and should not be used for legal interpretations or legal advice. Please consult an attorney for legal services and advice when necessary.

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Top Twenty Housing Inspection Checklist for Rental Units

- Interior
- Heating under tenant control and fully operable;
- Smoke alarm installed and operable;
- Window glazing intact and in good repair;
- Hot water is readily available;
- Paint film in good condition (no peeling spots).
- Bathroom
- Room is sanitary and ventilation is provided;
- Fixtures in good, sound condition and with no leaks;
- Duplex (GFCI) outlets (if installed) work correctly;
- No broken tiles, mirrors, glass, etc.
- Heater, if provided, is in good working condition.
- Kitchens
- Sink is in good, sound condition with no leaks;
- Garbage disposal, if provided, works and is properly installed;
- Adequate ventilation is provided;
- Appliances in good working order.
- General
- Fire systems are operable and have current certifications;
- Water heaters installed correctly;
- No hazardous electrical wiring / plumbing / maintenance;
- No infestation of insects, vermin or rodents;
- Adequate garbage storage and removal facilities;
- Buildings maintained and of sound structure.

