

FIRE & CRIME CHECKLIST
CHECK HERE BEFORE SIGNING A RENTAL LEASE

This information has been compiled to assist tenants in making the best decisions in their rental choices by the North Avondale Rental Housing Committee. Make use of the questions that are important to you.

Signing a lease is a serious decision. The condition of the rental unit needs to match what is stated in the lease. If not, it must be noted on the lease before you sign the lease.

These are questions you should ask before you sign:

- KEYS
 - Does the landlord have tight control of the keys?
 - Does the landlord have a published policy about issuing and replacing keys?
 - Are key control procedures used to ensure that locks are changed when keys are lost or not returned?
 - Are tenants informed of who has keys to their living space?
- BUILDING SECURITY
 - Looking at the building from the outside how easy would it be to break in?
 - Are the doors to the outside secure and kept locked?
 - Are the entry doors, stairways, sidewalks and parking lots well lit?
 - Does the building have a buzzer for guests and deliveries?
 - Are locks on the doors of the building and/or apartment adequately secure?
 - Do the front and rear doors have 180-degree peep holes?
 - If door pins are outside, are they non-removable?
 - These four questions are important to prevent a door from being forced open.
 - Does the door securely fit the jamb?
 - Is the door jamb fastened tightly?
 - Is the strike plate securely fastened to the door jamb?
 - Does the bolt extend sufficiently into the strike plate?
 - Are door locks located so they can't be reached through a window?
 - Do sliding glass doors have blocking cleats to prevent opening from the outside?
 - Are there sturdy locks on all the windows?
 - Can windows left open for ventilation be secured?
 - Are window air conditioners secured from the inside?
 - Are security bars/screens provided if it is a ground floor or basement unit?
 - Is there a dead bolt and peephole to your unit?
 - Are doors to the laundry room kept locked?
 - Are there safe places to go in case of a tornado?
 - Does the house or apartment building have current city and county occupancy permits?
 - Does the plumbing work or leak? You can turn on the faucets, flush the toilets, and look for leaking water from pipes in or above the unit.

- Are the bathroom fixtures in good repair?
- Are the stairs in good condition?
- Are all appliances working as they should?
- BUILDING AND GROUNDS CONDITIONS
 - When was the last building inspection and crime assessment?
 - To check with Cincinnati Building Inspectors, contact Edward Cunningham at <Edward.Cunningham@cincinnati-oh.gov> or call 352-3271.
 - Crime assessment: (North Avondale Neighborhood Officer Paul Graves - 569-8649 <paul.graves@cincinnati-oh.gov>)
 - Are the mailboxes in good condition with residents' names printed on them?
 - Are they in a well lit area with strong locks?
 - Are the buildings and grounds well maintained?
 - Is the landscaping well-trimmed and no burned-out outside lights?
 - Are shrubs cut below window level?
 - Are the tree limbs cut above window level so that you can see in and out?
 - Does the apartment complex provide security services or have a security system?
 - If unit entrance is ground level, is the number visible from the street?
 - Is there a clearly displayed house number that can be seen by emergency vehicles from the street even at night?
 - Are entryways visible from the street?
 - Is the entry door made of core wood or metal?
 - Do curtains, blinds, or draperies cover the windows?
- PARKING
 - If there is a garage, is it well-lit and lockable?
 - Is parking usually available close to your door?
 - Is the area well lit at night and on weekends?
 - Are there designated visitor parking spaces?
- SURROUNDING AREA/NEIGHBORHOOD
 - Do neighbors feel safe?
 - Is there a high turnover of residents in the building and surrounding buildings?
 - Are the lots and surrounding streets clean and free of abandoned cars?
 - How close is the building to high traffic areas?
- FIRE CHECKLIST
 - When was the last fire inspection?
 - Are there working smoke alarms?
 - How old are they?
 - Are they battery-operated or hardwired?
 - How often are they checked and the batteries changed?
 - Smoking Alarms should be located:
 - In the hallway outside the sleeping quarters
 - Outside of the kitchen
 - In multi level buildings in the area where the two floors meet
 - Outside the laundry room
 - In apartment building common areas such as a hallway or foyer

(long hallways may require multiple smoke alarms)

- Are there 2 unblocked exits from each floor?
- Is the property near fire stations and other emergency services?
- Are the living unit entry doors rated for fire?
- Are there at least 2 ways to exit your bedroom?
- Are there EXIT signs in apartment building hallways to indicate accessible escape route?
- Is a sprinkler system installed and maintained?
- Are fire extinguishers available and working?
- Were the fire extinguishers inspected within the last year?
- Do you know how to use a fire extinguisher?
 - If not, don't wait until a fire to learn!
- Has there been a fire in this building? If so, why?
- Do you know how to use the cooking and heating appliances correctly?
- Do you know the number for a free fire inspection? (Cincinnati - 678-1998 - Bobby Smith)
- Is the electrical outlets/wiring adequate for all the appliances and equipment you are bringing - without the need for extension cords?
- Do the outlets and fixtures appear to be in good condition? Are they working?

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ACCORDING TO OHIO TENANT-LANDLORD LAW

TENANT RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Keep the premises safe and sanitary.
- Keep premises free of trash and garbage.
- Use and operate all electrical and plumbing fixtures properly.
- Comply with the requirements imposed on tenants by applicable housing, health and safety codes.
- Allow the landlord or agent to enter the apartment for inspection to see what repairs are needed or to make repairs or improvements at reasonable times, if the landlord or agent has given reasonable notice.
- Not intentionally or negligently destroy, damage, deface property or remove any plumbing fixture or appliance from the premises.
- Not act in a manner that will disturb any neighbor's peaceful enjoyment of the premises.

IF THERE ARE PROBLEMS AFTER THE TENANT HAS MOVED IN:

- First, try to resolve the problem with the landlord/ management.
- If you are unable to resolve the problems with your landlord, the most effective resolution is to put your rent in escrow. For advice on how to do this correctly and other legal options call Legal Aid at 241-9400.
- Tenants can form a Tenants' Council or just get together to deal with problems they see. In fact, the landlord can benefit from the input of these groups.

LANDLORD RESPONSIBILITIES FOR TENANT TO BE AWARE OF:

- Comply with requirements of any building, housing, health or safety codes which materially affect health and safety.

- Make all repairs and do whatever is reasonably necessary to put and keep the premises in a fit and habitable condition.
- Keep the common area of the building safe and sanitary.
- Provide trash and waste receptacles.
- Supply running hot water, a reasonable amount of hot water, and reasonable heat at all times.
- Give tenant reasonable notice of intent to enter into a tenant's apartment and enter only at reasonable times.
- Provide the tenant with the name, address, and phone number of the landlord and agent, if any, in writing, at the beginning of tenancy.
- Keep all electrical, plumbing, heating, ventilating, and air conditioning fixtures and appliances and elevators in good safe working condition, when these things are supplied or required to be supplied by the landlord.
- Not harass the tenant by unreasonable or repeated demands to enter the tenant's apartment.
- If the landlord or agent enters without the tenant's permission or repeatedly demands entry, the tenant can recover actual damages resulting from the landlord's entry.

LANDLORD INFORMATION FROM THE COMMUNITY:

- Rental Housing is a business. The owner/Landlord is responsible for managing his/her property in a professional manner. The community expects that all tenants will be treated the same, regardless of income or whether the rent is subsidized.
- As in the suggestion for a Tenants' Council above, organizing and developing a sense of community within your tenant group can have many benefits for the landlord. It can be more effective long term if the landlord takes the lead. See the chapter "Apartment Watch/Promoting Community" in the Landlord Training Manual under Landlord Resources on the website. The Cincinnati manual has additional information on local laws and organizations. Putting it's advice into practice will in the long run produce a greater profit for an investment in rental housing.