

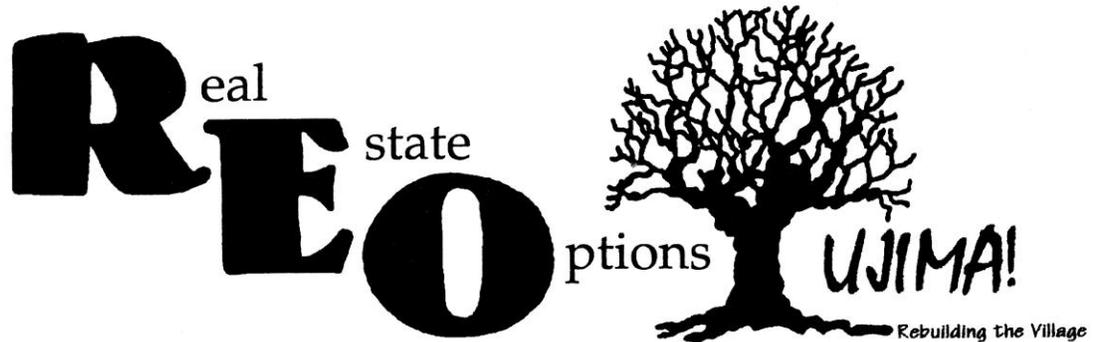
# TENANT ORIENTATION HANDBOOK



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To ALL of our Residents:

We are offering a new **FREE** service that we hope will be a great benefit to all of you.

To help keep YOU updated on any issues that affect your living situation, we've started a new **Text Alert** service.

We would like you to take a moment and **please subscribe to our new free Text Alert service** so you can receive alerts (text messages) on your mobile phone as soon as we send them! We will only send text alerts when we think we have vital information that will affect you (for example – keeping you posted on a City-wide electrical outage and when to expect power again).

All you have to do is just send a text message to **41411** with **REOAlert** (small or capital letters – doesn't matter) in it, or subscribe online at: <http://www.TextMarks.com/REOALERT>

**PLEASE** take a quick moment and *do it right now!*

You will receive a confirmation text back.

We are also offering a 2<sup>nd</sup> FREE service for prospective tenants - it is a text alert service regarding upcoming vacancies. If you have friends/family looking for a place to rent, have them subscribe by sending a text message to **41411** with **RENTALS** (small or capital letters – doesn't matter) in it, or subscribe online at: <http://www.TextMarks.com/RENTALS>

**THANKS** for helping us supply you with the best service we possibly can.

## (8) Tips To Keep The Rent Low

1. Pay rent on time. Everyone has to pay bills on time (even your landlord).
2. If you expect trouble with the rent tell the landlord immediately. If you are allowed to make a payment plan -- stick to it.
3. Report any maintenance needs to the management as soon as they arise. According to your Rental Agreement, if you do not notify the management of maintenance needs immediately, you could be held liable for excess utility bills and/or damage.
4. Don't waste utilities (gas, electricity or water) if you don't pay them. The landlord pays for every gallon of water, kilowatt of electricity or cubic foot of gas. Your rental amount is based on certain usage. Excessive usage will always raise costs and, ultimately rents.
  - DO NOT leave fans running when no one is home (this is not only a lease violation and waste of money, it is a fire hazard!!).
  - Do NOT leave the TV on when no one is home.
  - DO NOT use a space heater or the stove as a heating source. (Deadly fumes are exhausted from these objects when in continual use.)
  - Freezers, extra refrigerators, side-by-side refrigerators, portable dishwashers or air-conditioners are only allowed with written permission.
  - DO NOT allow any non-resident guests to use the utilities (i.e. showers, laundry, etc.).
  - In the heating season (October 15 through May 15), make sure all storm windows are kept down at all times.
5. If you tell us you will be home to allow a repairmen to come into your home to do scheduled maintenance - be home! Frequently the landlord pays for service calls when no one is home and then has to pay again when the work is rescheduled. If this happens, the service call charge could be charged back to you.
6. Take care of fixtures such as stoves, plumbing fixtures, refrigerators, doors and the whole apartment or house. You will feel better and the upkeep costs

## (8) Tips To Keep The Rent Low (continued)

will be lower. Be honest when you or a family member accidentally breaks something. Be sure to call us for repairs immediately!

- **PLEASE REMEMBER:** If your home comes with any appliances such as a stove refrigerator, dishwasher, air-conditioner, garbage disposal or washer or dryer, these appliances **ARE NOT INCLUDED IN THE RENT**. If you wish to use these appliances, you agree to assume *all* responsibility for care and maintenance, keeping these fixtures in a clean, sanitary and properly working manner. If you ever wish to use your own appliances, you may request that the owner's appliances be removed from the premises
7. Report vandalism quickly to police and to the management. Vandals can sometimes be caught and will come back if the vandalism is not repaired. Please be aware that most vandalism is caused by someone who knows you. Use security devises supplied by the management and wise about whom you let in your home.
  8. When you move out. clean the place up. Leave it the way you received it, exactly as described in the move-in condition checklist, except for ordinary wear and tear. If you have any concerns about what needs to be done at move-out, please call us and we will visit you to discuss this.

## Natural Gas Safety

Natural gas is an excellent, clean and efficient energy source. It is also dangerous. Natural Gas smells bad on purpose (they add a chemical so that you can detect that it is leaking)

### ***What to do if you smell gas:***

- Open windows to ventilate
- Don't light a match
- Don't turn anything electric on or off
- Leave the building if the odor is strong
- **DO NOT** use your phone! - go to another location and:
- Call the gas company - **NICOR GAS** - 888-Nicor4u (1-888-642-6748)
- then Call the manager - 233-HOME (4663)

**REMEMBER!** **NEVER** use a stove or oven to heat your home! Use appliances only for their intended purposes!

# Fire Safety Tips

1. Maintain your smoke detectors because your life may depend on them. You are responsible for replacing the batteries in your smoke detector. Test the detectors once a month. Clean off cob webs and dirt when you test them.
2. Practice exit drills from your home or apartment. Design an escape plan for everyone and practice it. For more detail contact your local fire department for booklets on home fire drills.
3. Crawl low in smoke, moving on hands and knees. Cleaner air is near the floor. Heat and smoke rise,
4. Stop, drop and roll on the ground to smother the flames if your clothing catches fire. Cover your face for protection.
5. Cool a burn with cool water. Contact a doctor if the burn blisters or is severe.
6. If you are in a non-smoking unit - DO NOT smoke or allow others to smoke. This is in strict violation of your Rental Agreement and you may jeopardize your living situation along with being responsible for any and all smoke-related damage. If you are allowed to smoke in the unit -- watch smokers like hawks. Use large heavy deep ashtrays. Empty ash trays into toilet. Check under couches, beds, chair cushions for smoldering butts. Never allow anyone to smoke in bed (especially if they drink or take any kind of drugs legal or not).
7. If you are given written permission to use a space heater -- give space heaters space. Keep flammables at least 36" from the heater. Keep kids away from heaters. Turn them off at bed time or when you go out. Do not ever use space heaters to dry clothes (or anything else).
8. Be careful when cooking (a very common place for fire to start). Keep young children out of the way. Turn handles of pots and pans away from the front so children cannot get to them. If grease catches fire place a lid over the pan, turn off burner, never use water on a grease fire. You can use a properly rated fire extinguisher (13 rating), baking soda, or salt will help put the fire out. Call the fire department if the fire cannot be contained in a few seconds. Keep ranges clean of grease and food.
7. Practice Safety with electricity. if an appliance gives off smoke or the smell of

## Fire Safety Tips (continued)

burning, turn it off and have it checked for repair. Do not place cords under rugs. Check the cords on appliances and replace if frayed or broken. If you replace a fuse be sure the replacement is of the same amperage. Don't plug many appliances into the same outlet. If there is a fire from an electrical appliance call the fire department and (if you can get to the fuse box) turn off the electricity. Use only C rated fire extinguisher and never use water!

8. A match is a tool- for adults only. Keep matches and lighters where children cannot get to them. Teach children to give matches and lighters to parents if they find them.

## Renter's Insurance

The landlord does not carry insurance on the contents of your apartment. Any losses (or complete loss of all of your belongings) will come out of your pocket unless you have renter's insurance. This type of insurance is generally a bargain and is available from almost all insurance agencies.

Renter's insurance covers you\* if you are sued by a guest that is injured in your apartment (the landlord is usually not liable for what happens inside your unit), if you are sued by certain damage a family member does (wild baseball hit), or pet damage.

After you get insurance, but before a loss, take an inventory of the contents of each room. The list should include the type of item, make and model if it is an appliance, where and when it was purchased and how much it cost. Keep this list outside the home (at the office, work, or at a relatives home). This will simplify your job if there is a claim. Most insurance salespeople have forms for inventorying your household.

### **True story:**

A fire in a single family house wiped out all of the clothes, furniture, appliances of a family. They were made homeless and asset-less in one night. Their renter's insurance came through with a check for over \$12,000 plus living expenses until they found a new place. It was a very tough month for them but think of what it would have been like without the insurance.

- \* check out the policies that are being offered because they have different coverage.

# Security

The theory of good security is to make the crook's job tough enough that he picks someone else to rip off.

You must start by looking at your apartment or house the way a burglar would:

1. Look for unlocked windows and doors and debris around to allow you to reach a window (like ladders, tables, crates, etc.)
2. Can you look inside and see (or hear) valuables like TV's, stereos, racks of CD's, VCR's?

Since it is expensive, impractical, and probably impossible to make your place burglar-proof, you should take the approach that you will make his job as tough as possible.

1. Clean up outside areas so there is nothing to help him.
2. Use your locks (both the knob lock and the deadbolt).
3. Get a sticker from an alarm company (some hardware stores carry the stickers).
4. If you hide a key outside, do not let others, including friends, know where it is, or see you get the concealed key.
5. When you go out even for a night, consider using some timers on lights, TV's and radios to make it seem like someone is there.
6. Keep tabs of your keys and never put your address on the keys.
7. Many burglars are literally invited in. Know who you open the door for before you open it.
8. Be aware of what you put out for weekly garbage collection. Be discreet when throwing out packaging so as to not advertise to any would-be thieves as to what may be inside your home.
9. Windows are popular ways in. A window lock is rarely effective and is frequently open. According to the Police, the easiest security on a double hung window is to drill through the lower sash to the upper sash and push in a large double-headed nail. We drill these holes in all wooden double sashes on first floor windows and upper windows that could be accessible by roofs, etc.
10. Keep a vacation checklist so that you remember to stop the newspaper and mail, get the grass cut, etc.

**The Police tell us that a *majority* of break-ins are caused by people that the resident personally knows. Choose your friends wisely.**

# Energy Efficiency

Energy is a major expense for who ever pays the bill. Ultimately, the tenant pays for all energy usage through rent. It is in everyone's interest to save energy dollars.

Here is the typical residential energy usage profile:

Heating	48%
Lighting, Cooking, appliances	18%
Hot water	14%
Refrigeration	13%
Cooling	7%

Tips to lower your energy bill or increase your comfort:

1. Lower your thermostat setting. (Put on more clothes in layers.)
2. Clean your radiators (for hot water heat), put insulation and a reflector behind the radiator. For gas forced air furnaces - be sure to keep your registers clean and not blocked by furniture or other items.
3. Lower the temperature of your hot water at the water heater.
4. Take showers, not baths and save  $\frac{1}{2}$  the hot water. Buy a low flow shower head and save even more.
5. Remember to inform the landlord about any leaky faucets and running toilets.
6. Put an insulation blanket around the water heater and pipe insulation on the hot water pipes.
7. At night shut blinds, close shades, close drapes to keep heat in. Open them whenever a window receives direct sun.
8. Use florescent screw-in lamps to replace regular bulbs.
9. Turn off lights.
10. Keep bulbs, fixtures, diffusers clean.
11. Clean the coils behind or beneath the refrigerator at least every three months.
12. Thaw meat, poultry in refrigerator (their thawing will help cool the other food and save energy).
13. Cook foods together in the oven. The most efficient use of the oven is to

## Energy Efficiency (continued)

cook several things at once, adjust the cooking times.

15. Use the toaster oven, if you have one, for small amounts of food instead of the oven. Use the microwave instead of the oven or range top for small amounts.
15. If you have a dish washer or clothes washer make sure the loads are full and always use cold or warm settings instead of hot. Use air to dry the dishes or clothes when possible.

## Tips and Standards for Cleanliness

*Keeping your apartment or house clean is an obligation under the terms of the lease. Food left around, dirty ranges, and debris left around all contribute to increased risk of vermin infestation, disease, safety problems and fires. Our inspection program is designed to provide safe and clean living quarters. For this to work you must do your part. You as the tenant are the primary beneficiary of these safety and fitness programs.*

*If we haven't been by for other reasons, we may be coming around for maintenance and housekeeping inspections. To help us in the effort of providing a great living unit, we would appreciate the following cleaning be done as often as necessary (in some cases, this means daily):*

Wipe down range and oven after every use and thoroughly clean if necessary.  
Wash splattered grease off walls, cabinets, etc. *immediately* after each time you cook

Wash out trash cans.

Completely vacuum all rugs, scrub/mop all floors, and wash all walls.

Clean baseboards and window trim and inside windows with Spic and Span or equivalent cleanser.

Remove all debris from outside your unit.

Remove all materials from around furnace and water heater.

Remove, clean and replace pop-up drain strainers.

Clean and check smoke detector.

Remove all clothes, and debris from floor.

*Once a year (and more often if needed) you are responsible for having all carpets **professionally cleaned** with a receipt sent to us as proof of cleaning.*

# REPAIR CHARGES

We will keep the property in good repair and promptly fix anything that breaks through normal wear and tear (PLEASE notify us IMMEDIATELY of any needed repairs!)

Please expect service work during normal business hours (7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Mon - Fri).

If we have to redecorate or make repairs because of misuse or neglect on your (or your guests') part, you will be held responsible and we will bill you for the repair costs. Costs in making such repairs will be payable as "additional rent" according to your Rental Agreement. What this means is, let's say for example, you break a window and it costs us \$30 to repair; we would give you a bill for the repair costs to be due and payable at the same time your next rent payment is due. If you only pay the base rent and do not include the cost of the bill, we have the right to deduct the bill first from any amount you have paid, and serve you with a 5-Day Notice to pay the remainder due. If you do not pay the full amount due within the 5 day period described in the Notice, you jeopardize your rental situation as we may begin eviction proceedings.

The following is a list of charges if we are called in to do a repair due to misuse or neglect. Please note that these charges are averages. Sometimes the actual charges are higher; sometimes they are lower. But most of the time they are exactly as shown. Allowances are figured in for normal wear and tear, of course, and for the length of time something has been in use. Replacement charges include parts and labor:

## **Chargeable Maintenance (averages):**

Un-blocking a toilet (when something that doesn't belong in it is found)	\$35 up
A Missing or Dead Battery Found In Your Smoke Detector	\$ 5
Broken window	\$29 up
Hole in wall	\$40 up
Broken door	\$50 up
Broken fixture (toilet, sink, vanity, kitchen cabinet)	\$35 up
Service call for appliance (due to abuse or neglect)	\$55 up
Replace broken lock (replace lock from lost keys or requested change)	\$50 up
Lost key call (let in only, payment due upon entry)	\$25
Lost key for common entrance door (replace locks and keys supplied to all tenants in building)	\$40 up
New keys	\$ 10 set
Repaint walls, ceiling	\$45 up
Clean carpet	\$69/room up
General cleaning	\$25/room up

## Proper Move-out Procedures

In the lease the tenants and the landlord have to give each **other a full rental period's written notice** (*on or before the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the final rental period*) before vacating an apartment or terminating a lease. This notice period allows the tenant to find a new apartment or allows the landlord time to advertise and find a new tenant. The actual day the keys are turned in to the landlord or the end of the current month is considered the day that the rental agreement ends for rent calculation purposes.

The best situation is for the tenant to make an appointment to turn in the keys on the same day that the move-out inspection takes place. If that is not convenient the actual inspection may take place a few days before or after move-out. The move-out inspection will be performed with or without the tenant. The move-out inspection reviews the move-in check sheet (which was filled out by both parties and agreed to at move-in) and evaluates any differences in the condition of the unit. At no time during the inspection will estimates or costs of cleaning and repairs be discussed or promised.

Since normal wear and tear is a cost that is borne by the landlord, the inspection is looking for abnormal damage or filth. We expect the apartment to be returned to us in approximately the same condition and as clean as it was rented in. Things like holes in walls, broken appliances, excessive debris and trash, missing or burned-out light bulbs, missing or dead smoke detector batteries, destroyed carpet, etc. are considered abnormal and you will be charged accordingly for these things.

Within thirty (30) days after you have moved out completely and returned the keys, we shall provide a written accounting of the disposition of your deposits and shall return the same to you. If there are certain repairs that must be made in which a final cost cannot be ascertained within thirty days, you will receive an itemized letter explaining this. Then within thirty days from this letter you will receive a finalized accounting of your deposits.

*Deductions from the security deposit might include: damage to the apartment or building that is chargeable to the tenant, unpaid rent, unpaid late charges, court costs, and unpaid utilities.*

Using the security deposit for the last month's rent is not acceptable and is a direct and serious violation of the rental agreement. If the last month's rent is not paid on time when due, an eviction suit may begin and you may find yourself without a home before the end of the month.

# What Happens If The Rent Is Late

Remember, it is your responsibility to have your rent in by the rental due date stated in your rental agreement. And remember, doing so you are able to save money by receiving our "on-time" discount of \$25.00!

If you ever think you might not have the rent paid to Real Estate Options (either by mail, postmarked no later than the rent due date or deposited in the R.E.O. dropbox or online through PayPal) on the day it is due, call or write as soon as you know. Our biggest thing is COMMUNICATION. If we do not hear from you, we can only assume you are avoiding paying the rent intentionally. We understand that at times it may be difficult to pay the rent in a timely manner. Partial payments show good faith on your part. We will still, however, have to follow the rules. Late charges must be collected in full even if partial payments are made.

Here is what to expect (step-by-step) if your rent is ever late.

If your rent is due by the first day of the month, it must be *received* by the first day of the month to be considered "on time" and qualify for the "on time" discount described in your rental agreement.

*If your rent is even just one day late, you do not qualify for the discount and must pay the "full rent" described in your rental agreement.*

If rent is not received by the day after it is due, you will immediately receive a **5-Day Notice**. A 5-Day Notice allows you 5 days, by law, to get the rent paid or move. Please be aware that even if you do move, you will still owe rent for the month because you did not give a proper 30-day written notice to move. Even if you called and communicated that you would be a day or two late with the rent, you will still receive a 5-Day Notice. This is a rule we are required to follow strictly.

If the full rent is paid within the allotted 5 days, no further steps are taken and you may continue to live in your apartment.

If rent is still not paid after the 5 allotted days, we have the right to begin legal action to regain possession of the apartment due to your failure to pay the rent.

Once a lawsuit is filed (called a Forcible Entry and Detainer Action or F.E.D.), we have the option to accept rent from you and allow you to stay, or accept rent and still require you to move or deny any payment from you and require you to move. At this stage of the process, you are now also legally responsible for any costs involved in filing the eviction (currently this is \$113 plus the cost of service which can vary in price, though usually between \$25 - \$50).

## What Happens If The Rent Is Late (continued)

When the rent is still not paid by the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the rental period, late fees begin accruing in the amount of \$5.00 per day each day after the 10<sup>th</sup> day until the full rent and any other accrued charges are paid.

If an eviction suit is filed, you will receive a summons which will state the time and date that you will have to go to court for a hearing (usually the following Wednesday at 9:00 a.m.).

At the court hearing, the judge will ask you if you owe rent. The judge will then decide whether you must vacate the premises. If the judge decides in our favor, he/she can order you to be out of the apartment that same day. **UNDER ILLINOIS LAW, IT DOES NOT MATTER IF YOU HAVE CHILDREN, IF YOU ARE PREGNANT, IF YOU HAVE NO PLACE TO GO, THE JUDGE CAN ORDER YOU TO MOVE THE SAME DAY YOU GO TO COURT!**

At the same time the judge signs the **Order for Possession** (which says when you have to be out and how much money you now legally owe us) and hands it to you, we will hand you a **No Trespass Notice**. A **No Trespass Notice** states that if you are found on or in the property after that point in time determined by the Judge, you can be arrested immediately for criminal trespass.

We would hope that matters never get this far, but want you to be fully aware of what happens if you do not pay the rent.

## What Happens If You Violate Your Rental Agreement

Just as we are obligated to perform in a certain manner by the Rental Agreement, so are you. This is why we go over the Rental Agreement paragraph by paragraph with you at move-in, so you understand fully what you are committing to by signing the Rental Agreement.

If you ever breach any part of the rental agreement (except for non-payment of rent) you will be given a **10-Day Notice**. There are two types of 10-Day Notices, those that can be **curable**, and those that are **non-curable**. It is up to Management to decide if a violation of the lease will be allowed to be cured. If you are given a *curable* 10-Day Notice, you will have 10 days by law, to cure the violation and stay in your apartment. Management does not have to accept any promises or solutions on your part, and may deem the violation *non-curable*. You will then be allowed 10 days to move and deliver up possession of the apartment.

# What Happens If You Are Found Doing Any Illegal Activity on the Property

If Management has any rebuttable presumption of any illegal activity occurring on the property (anything from a Class A Misdemeanor (such as Battery or Domestic Violence) to a Class X Felony), you may be served a **5-Day Notice to vacate the premises**. At this point the rental agreement is immediately void and you would be given 5 days to move and deliver up possession of the apartment.

## Barring Notices

Your Rental Agreement contains the following clause:

Tenant acknowledges that the management has the right to require any of the Tenant's guests to leave the premises or be barred from the premises if these non-resident guests are deemed by the Management to be disruptive in any way or violating any condition of this Agreement. Tenants must inform their guests of all rules and regulations stipulated by this rental agreement. If rules and regulations are broke by tenant's guests, they may be barred and/or arrested for criminal trespassing.

What this clause means is if you have a guest over (be it a friend, acquaintance, or even your mom!) and they have been deemed disruptive or violating any condition of your Rental Agreement by the Management, they will be giving a "Barring Notice" to leave the property. If they choose to return to the property at any time, the Management has the right and ability to call the Police and have that person arrested for violating the Barring Notice. Also, if the Police or other neighbors notice this person on the premises they may call the authorities to have this person removed/arrested.

Because of the ways our current laws are written, it is *very* difficult for the police to deal with people they suspect doing illegal activity but have no hard and fast evidence. This Barring Notice is available to landlords to help in keeping their tenants safe.

\* \* \* \* \*

We are excited to have you as tenants, and look forward to serving your rental needs. Please contact us at any time if you have a concern related to your living situation. Our biggest thing is *communication!*

And, speaking of communication, **due to our sometimes massive call volume, email ( [REO@RentFreeport.com](mailto:REO@RentFreeport.com) ) or text ( 815-233-4663 ) are generally the fastest and best method of contacting us.** In the event of an emergency though, please attempt to reach us by phone. There is no need to leave more than one message if you get voicemail.

Thank you for taking the time to read this manual!

-- Real Estate Options  
(815) 233-HOME (4663)  
[reo@rentfreeport.com](mailto:reo@rentfreeport.com)