

## Look in the Basement

- X Be sure to go into the basement to check on the condition of the heating system. If forced air gas, even in summer, turn the thermostat up to see if the furnace actually works.
- X Look at the water heater to see if it is leaking. If you notice any serious problems, think carefully about the chance you'll be taking with your family's health and safety if you rent the apartment.
- X Ask for a list of damages deducted from the previous tenant. Ask the landlord to put promised repairs in writing. But ask yourself: "If he didn't make these repairs for the last tenant, why should I believe he'll make the repairs for me?"

If your landlord doesn't make promised repairs, call the building inspection department to request an inspection. In the City of Milwaukee call the **Department of Neighborhood Services** at 414-286-2268. Don't wait. If you have been served with eviction papers, DNS will only respond to complaints about hazardous conditions until the litigation ends.

For more information contact the **Division of Consumer Protection** at 800-422-7128 to file a complaint. Or call the **Tenant Resource Center** in Madison at 608-257-0006 for legal assistance.

## Recording

Is the property recorded? Non-owner occupied property and all commercial residential property must be recorded. If it is not, perhaps your landlord is not up to date on a number of other issues as well. Check the Internet to see if he/she is recorded with Property Recording.

## Internet Assistance

The City of Milwaukee has put valuable information about all property ownership, violations, complaints and permits on the world wide web. All City libraries offer computers with internet access. This information is useful for tracking the performance of landlords making repairs and handling complaints. Problem landlords will be unresponsive and likely result in a series of litigated fines. Responsible landlords may have some violations, but they will be taken care of in 30 days or less.



A high number of complaints can also alert you as to the ability of a landlord to manage the property. While the number of complaints may be disturbing, one condemnation order is more serious than 25 paint orders. Consider the consequences of renting a place prone to constant complaints and building code violations.

To check out the data go to:

**[www.city.milwaukee.gov](http://www.city.milwaukee.gov)**

From here, click on the link PROPERTY DATA and enter the address. If a duplex, enter the lowest house number. Click on any "blue" field to drill down for more information.

Making informed decisions can save you time, money and make life easier for everyone.



*produced by the*

**Department of  
Neighborhood Services  
841 N. Broadway Rm 104  
Milwaukee Wi. 53202  
(414) 286-2268**

# DON'T RENT TROUBLE!



- Advice on how to avoid renting problem property.
- Itemized check-lists renters should use.
- What to do if promised repairs are not made.

Information compiled from the  
**State of Wisconsin Agriculture  
Division of Consumer Protection**  
and the  
**City of Milwaukee Department of  
Neighborhood Services**



## What You Should Know Before You Rent

- ✓ Landlords may not advertise or rent condemned property.
- ✓ Landlords **must disclose housing code violations** they have been notified about, but have not corrected as well as those defects they know about but have not corrected.
- ✓ They must also reveal structural defects, a lack of hot or cold running water, serious plumbing or electrical problems, and other hazards.
- ✓ They must provide an address that is staffed regularly and can find a responsible person to pay rent or address concerns to.

## Landlords Must Also Disclose:

- ☆ If the heating unit cannot maintain a temperature of at least 67° F.
- ☆ If you are required to pay utilities and how utility charges will be divided if the dwelling is not individually metered.
- ☆ Determine who pays extermination fees, cuts the grass and removes the snow. It is illegal to store gasoline filled equipment in doors.

## Look before you Lease

Finding a decent place to rent requires thorough inspections of apartments and the strength to keep looking when apartments don't pan out.

You have the right to inspect the unit before you rent it. We recommend you take along a flashlight, light bulb, hair dryer, pen, and the following checklist:

These will be your inspection tools. Use the following list to check for problems.

Bedrooms in attics and basements are illegal if only one exit. Call 286-2268 to make a complaint.

## Electrical

- ✗ Turn on each switch to see if it works. If there is no bulb in the socket, use yours.
- ✗ Check every outlet by plugging in your hair dryer. Obviously, there are problems if a fuse blows or the dryer won't go on.

If outlets or sockets don't work, there could be dangerous defects in the electrical system that could cause a fire. There should be no extension cords to permanent equipment.

## Plumbing

- ✗ Turn on the sink and bathtub faucets to see if they work or leak.
- ✗ Flush the toilet to see if it operates properly or leaks.
- ✗ Do the drains operate properly?



## Look up

- ✗ Are ceilings water stained or cracked?
- ✗ Are walls water stained or cracked?

These may indicate a leaking roof, defective rain gutters, or defective plumbing upstairs. Water damage could cause the ceiling or walls to collapse.

## Safety

- ✗ Are the required smoke and carbon monoxide alarms installed near every sleep room and one on every floor including the basement?
- ✗ Are there deadbolt locks on the apartment doors and the exterior doors?

## Windows

- ✗ Are there storms and screens? Does the window open and lock?
- ✗ Very gently push on the windows to see if they are secure or loose in the frame.

## Rodents and Roaches

- ✗ Open cabinets and immediately shine the flashlight inside to detect roaches.
- ✗ Look for roach eggs and bed bugs.
- ✗ Look for rat and mouse holes and droppings in the back of cabinets and closets.
- ✗ Bed bugs like to hide in bedrooms behind wainscoting and head boards.