

Moving into your apartment or house

What are the landlord's responsibilities?

The landlord must provide the following:

- Drinkable water / Water in kitchen and bathroom
- Hot water
- Heat (in cold weather)
- Working sewer system
- Bathroom (bath tub or shower and toilet)
- Safe, working electrical system
- A lock for the door(s)
- An apartment or house not filled with insects or rodents
- Safe, sanitary condition of the structure of the house and outside area
- Working smoke alarms
- No chipping, peeling paint

What are the tenant's responsibilities?

- Pay the rent on time and regularly for the full length of the lease.
 - Keep canceled checks or money order slips as proof of any rent or security deposit you paid.
 - **Remember to get a receipt if you pay in cash or money order.** You should never pay your rent without getting some sort of receipt from your landlord! If your landlord will not give you rent receipts, write your own receipt and ask the landlord to sign it when you give the landlord the rent.
 - The receipt can simply say:
Received \$_____ from _____ for _____ (month) . Balance due \$ _____
Date _____ Landlord _____
- Take care of repairs when the damage is your fault.
- Clean the apartment or house to keep it in good condition.
- If repairs are needed, put a dated request in writing to the landlord . Keep a copy.
- Keep agreements made in the lease, such as not making too much noise.

Tips to remember when moving

Telephone, Cable, and Utilities

- You need to contact the local telephone, cable, and utility companies for installation and connection of whatever services you want.

Fire and Police Information

- Find the telephone number of the local fire and police departments and emergency numbers. Post these numbers by the telephone so they are handy in an emergency. Are you in a 911 area? For local resources and referrals, call 211 for information.
- If possible, have at least one fire extinguisher handy, preferably in the kitchen. Know how to operate the extinguisher . There should also be an extinguisher in the common hall of a multi-unit building.
- Pennsylvania law requires that the landlord supply a smoke alarm in working condition in each unit. The lease will state whether the tenant or landlord is responsible to check the smoke alarm and replace batteries when necessary. If the smoke alarm is not working, inform the landlord by phone and in writing. The landlord has 72 hours (3 days) to replace the smoke alarm. If the landlord doesn't replace it within that time period, you may send the landlord a letter stating that you are purchasing a smoke alarm and deducting the price from the next month's rent. When you pay the next month's rent, you must include the receipt for the smoke alarm. Multi-unit buildings will usually be required to have hard wired smoke detectors and Code Enforcement will order the landlord to follow the law.

Renters Insurance

- Your landlord's insurance does **not** cover your personal property. The landlord is **not** responsible for your belongings; you are . You will need to get renters insurance to cover theft, loss, or damage of your personal belongings .
- Contact several insurance agents and compare costs . Renter's insurance is surprisingly affordable . A policy may cost approximately \$120-\$240 per year . Check whether discounts are available .
- If a landlord's negligence causes damage to your property, you may have a claim against the landlord. But you might be faced with filing a lawsuit, proving the negligence and then collecting on the judgment. This is very difficult to do, especially if you are still living in the property or have limited resources. If you have renters insurance and the insurance company has evidence that someone else is responsible for the damages, they can hire an attorney and sue that party. But you still get your property repaired or replaced in a timely way by the insurance company.
 - *This handout contains a general statement of the law and should be used only as a guide.*
 - *It should not be considered legal advice because everyone's case is different.*
 - *The complete Self-Help Handbook for Tenants is available in electronic format*
 - *at <http://www.northpennlegal.org> in our Resources Section.*
 - *NPLS videos on rental housing are available on our website and at many area libraries.*