

A Newsletter for Housing Owners

METRO HRA
Housing & Redevelopment Authority

VIEWS



SPRING TUNE UP

By Joseph Kummer

As we transition from winter to spring and then summer, we are encouraged every year to drink water, take it easy when it gets really hot, and watch for signs for heat exhaustion. Does anyone really tell us how to look for the signs of stress on your property, and ways to relieve it? My toolbox is full of tools to help your property not get exasperated during the summer months. Before that one weekend we have each year of spring comes to a quick close, take some time to bring the property in for physical. Here are some of my tools for a happy, healthy, and safe summer!

Stay dehydrated. Wait, what? Is that a typo? Really quite the opposite of what the doctor tells you. Water is your greatest enemy for any property. The drier the better. Insulate the pipes in the basement, clean the gutters and make sure downspouts are on, before it starts raining! Invest in a dehumidifier for the lower levels so you don't wind up with dry rot or mold years down the road. Slope the ground away from the property. Did you forget to turn the hose bibs off last fall? Get over to the property before it's too late and the ice thaws and you find a split pipe in the basement.



Use sunscreen. You just put that beautiful balcony or deck on, and next year, it looks like the Sahara Desert. Take some time and seal it up. It protects not only from water damage, but sun damage. Chipping and peeling paint doesn't get better and once it starts, it multiplies. Little hands love to pick too. With the lead paint rules, you're money and safety ahead putting another coat on before the peeling starts. Scrape off the rust on the railings and paint them too. While you're at it, make sure they are secure. **Shade is your friend.** You get hot in the sun, and so does your property. The best time to plant a tree is today or twenty years ago. Keeping the blinds pulled on summer days saves on cooling costs and sun damaged interiors. When you change out the windows, use low-e glass, it'll add years to the carpet and woodwork.

continued page 2...

SPRING 2015

COMING SOON

For your convenience, we will be offering a new secure, online service called AssistanceCheck starting **04/01/2015**. This convenient service allows you to contact us and make requests online rather than in-person, by phone or by mail. Some of the services offered include:

- Update your contact information
- Reschedule Inspections
- View and Print required documents
- View and print HAP Statements

You will receive a letter in the mail with your account PIN and easy setup instructions prior to 04/01/2015.

For now you can access owner information at www.metrohra.org.

IS THERE SOMETHING YOU WOULD LIKE TO KNOW?

If there are topics you would like to see addressed in upcoming issues of the newsletter, please e-mail them to Mary D at mary.d-hra@metc.state.mn.us.

...continued from page 1

The power of air conditioning. Ever walk into the grocery store in shorts, tank top, and flip flops, and by the time you reach the checkout, you've bought the left over sweatshirts from the high school football team 'cause you're so cold? I'm not talking about that kind of air conditioning. Yet, air conditioning doesn't just blow cold air. It takes the moisture out, and filters the air via the furnace filter. The number one cause of a failed unit is dirt. Clean the coils outside and change the filter. Pull the window unit out and hose it down. Now, the trick is to do this before the first hot day when everyone is too hot. Air conditioning is expensive to repair and replace. Keep it clean.

Dress appropriately. How do you dress your property? Well, step back onto the street and take a look. Are there broken window screens, blinds missing or badly damaged? Can some siding be replaced, painted, or maybe a few bricks tuck pointed? Is the landscaping tidy and trimmed? Trash picked up? People move more in the summer which means the property should look it's best to attract the best. This would be a good time to mention the lawn mower, string trimmer, or any other favorite landscaping tool you might have in your arsenal. Tune them up, clean them off, and sharpen everything. Makes for an easier manicure.

Don't overexert. Putting too much strain on something will cause it to break. Have you looked at your power and utility systems on the property to make sure they are functioning properly? Utility companies help you with audits to show you ways your property doesn't have to work itself to death. Put that electric water heater on an off-peak system and turn it down a tad. Have a saver switch installed on the air conditioning unit. Install CFL or LED lights. Have your drains inspected out to the street and get them snaked and cleaned out from roots that have grown inside the old clay pipes. A few hundred bucks now could save you thousands or more because of a sewer back up.

Expecting your property to work flawlessly in the middle of the summer without a little help is just asking for trouble.

Eat light. What does a property gobble up besides money? Water, electricity, gas. Changing things out to more energy efficient items will put the property on a diet. Change the old toilets, or install dual flush toilet valves. Sprinkler systems for the grass help cut down on water waste and keep the yard alive. Install timers on outside lights. Shut the standing pilot off on the heating system.

Stay sky aware. Visit the premises more often when the weather is pleasant. Be aware of what is going on. People are out and moving around much more during the warmer months.



Regular visits can help cut down on a property becoming dilapidated or you becoming a nuisance to the city or neighbors.

Use bug spray. You may laugh, but every backpack has some for the camping trip. Why would you not take care of your investment as well against anything that creeps, crawls, slithers, and flies? Pest control is vital to the health of a property. Summer is the best time to seal it up for winter against mice too. Spray for ants and spiders. Inspect for roaches, termites, and bees. Don't forget to crawl up in the attic to see if you need to evict anything that isn't paying rent. Do something about your findings right away.



Conserve your energy. Work smart, not hard. We've all heard it. Teach your tenants to help take care of your property. Turn the air conditioning up or off during the day when you're not around. Get a programmable thermostat. Install timers on the hoses so people don't walk away and leave them on. Water the grass in the early morning. Put timers or sensors on lights. Use technology to your advantage to save dollars on your property and make sense.

INSPECTIONS

Metro HRA encourages all landlords to prepare for the HQS inspection as soon as you receive notice of your inspection date. Checking for potential fail items and making repairs ahead of time greatly increases the possibility of a passed inspection on the first visit. If a unit has an excessive number of fail items, more than 15, or is in very poor condition the inspector may cancel the inspection and state that the unit be fixed up and a new full inspection scheduled.

If the unit does fail or is canceled due to excessive repairs needed, complete the repairs and call or e-mail for a re-inspection right away to avoid late or prorated rent. We will NO LONGER be automatically rescheduling re-inspections, you must contact us. We can be reached at hraispections@metc.state.mn.us or (651) 602-1626. DO NOT call the inspector directly he is not able to reschedule the inspection for you.

Rental payments begin the later of; the lease date, the date the tenant moves in or the date the unit passes inspection. HUD regulations prohibit rent payments on any unit that has not passed the initial and/or annual inspection or any unit that is not currently occupied by the assisted family.

Please be sure the repairs are completed BEFORE you call for a re-inspection.

Thank you for being proactive.

COMING SOON

HUD regulations have changed regarding annual inspections. Some units may qualify for a biennial inspection instead of an annual one. The unit must meet certain criteria set by HUD and the local Housing Authority, in this case Metro HRA. If you have a property with several units and one of them qualifies for a biennial inspection it does not mean that all of the units will qualify. There are some restrictions. We hope to implement this in 2015.

LANDLORD APPRECIATION:

Thank You for your participation in the Metro HRA rent assistance program. The Metro HRA assists over 6000 households each month, 45% of those households are elderly and/or disabled. Metro HRA appreciates all of our landlords who are committed to providing decent, safe, and sanitary housing for their tenants. We encourage landlords to have a clear, complete lease and to consistently enforce that lease with all of their tenants. Landlords who visit their properties on a somewhat regular basis, we recommend at least monthly, have the most success in enforcing their lease, maintaining their properties and keeping good tenants.

Thank you for helping us make this program a continued success, we can't do it without you.

GO GREEN - E-MAIL

Do we have your e-mail address? With the ever increasing cost of postage we would like to do as much of our day to day communication as possible by e-mail. Please contact Lona P. to provide your current e-mail address. She can be reached at lona.p-hra@metc.state.mn.us or 651-602-1565.

VENDOR NUMBERS

All of the correspondence you receive from Metro HRA should now include your vendor number. Please keep your vendor number handy and use it on ALL correspondence you send to Metro HRA to ensure we are providing you with the best possible service.

ENERGY STAR

Consider buying ENERGY STAR products next time you replace an appliance. It's good for you and good for the environment. Go to www.energystar.gov for more information.

DO YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT FAIR HOUSING?

Check out this website:

<http://fairhousingmn.org/>



METRO HRA

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OWNER BRIEFINGS!

Would you like to know more about the Section 8 rent assistance program but don't know who to ask? Metro HRA can help. We are offering ongoing briefings to provide Landlords/ Property Managers with valuable information about the Section 8 program. These briefings offer owners/managers an opportunity to see what is new, ask questions, and network with other property owners. The briefings last approximately one hour and are offered quarterly on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at Metro HRA, 390 North Robert St., St. Paul. Upcoming briefings are as follows:

- **May 12, 2015, 2:00 p.m.**
- **August 11, 2015, 10:00 a.m.**
- **November 10, 2015, 2:00 p.m.**

For more information or to register contact Mary D at mary.d-hra@metc.state.mn.us or **651-602-1445**.

DIRECT DEPOSIT

Metro HRA encourages all landlords to enroll in the direct deposit system as a convenient Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) option. By offering direct deposit, Metro HRA provides you the option to have your monthly HAP directly deposited into your checking or savings account.

Direct Deposit is a convenient way to receive your payments and eliminates the delays of mailing and the possibility of lost checks.

To request an enrollment form for direct deposit, or to make a change if you already have direct deposit, please contact Lona P. at Lona.P-hra@metc.state.mn.us or 651-602-1565

FREE ADVERTISING OPPORTUNITY

Do you have a vacancy to rent?

Housing Link is the primary distributor of affordable housing information in the Twin Cities. The Housing Link online listing service is easy to use and it is FREE. The website is viewed by almost 35,000 people each month and used to list vacancies by over 6,000 landlords. Get the word out through Housing Link! Visit www.housinglink.org, Click on the landlord link and advertise your affordable housing vacancies today.

This website also provides current Payment Standard and Utility Allowance information for the Twin Cities area Housing Authorities.