

A Newsletter for Housing Owners

METRO HRA

Housing & Redevelopment Authority

VIEWS

WINTER 2017



The TOOLBOX by Joseph Kummer

Let's talk plumbing! I think we all take plumbing for granted to a certain extent. Only when it malfunctions, and there is water everywhere, do we realize the complexity of plumbing and how much we rely on it to work for us. I'm digging in the dirtier part of my toolbox, especially where the drain snake sits, and offering a few tried and true tips I've learned over the years.

Garbage disposals: First, attach the small Allen wrench to the drain pipe near the disposal that you insert in the center of the disposal underneath when it jams. It'll come in handy and could even save you a trip to the property or an overflowing drain. Next, make sure the cable clamp connector is firmly secured to the disposal. Finally, show the tenant how to reset the disposal in case of an overload.

Zip it: Zip-its are great, and they only cost a couple of bucks. Zip-its are about two-feet long, plastic, have barbs every inch or two, and are very thin. You should have one under every sink. Why? Zip-its can help to pull out hair from drains in a matter of seconds without making you take anything apart.

Toilet leaks: An average leak in a toilet wastes about 5,000-7,000 gallons of water per month. Not only is this a strain on the water and sewer supply, but it's also a huge waste of money! Many tenants won't even notice the toilet running. You will, as soon as you get the water bill. A quick check to the property on a regular basis will eliminate this problem and save hundreds of dollars.

Loose toilets: While you are checking the toilet for leaks, give the bowl a push with your knee to see if it moves or rocks on its base. HRA inspectors do this at inspection. A loose toilet can cause all sorts of problems. If the wax ring is compromised, it can leak out of the base of the toilet every time it's flushed. It can release sewer gas, as well. A small leak isn't noticeable until the floor turns soft and rots underneath over time. Water can leak to the floor below, ruining ceilings and disrupting neighboring units. The toilet can shift and crack; leaving an even bigger mess! As a landlord, you should show your tenant where the water shut-offs are for all pipes and tell them when to use them.

Hose bibs: I can't count how many times I have walked up to a house in January to find the garden hose still attached to the house. Even worse is when there is an ice fall running down the siding. This presents a major problem when the pipes burst and create a flood in the basement. Get to your property in the fall before it freezes and make sure all outdoor hose bibs are shut, and the hoses are coiled up and put away for winter.

LANDLORD INCENTIVES

BIENNIAL INSPECTIONS

Does your property usually pass housing quality standards inspection or fail for just a few minor things? If so, you may qualify for biennial inspections, which means we would only do a physical inspection of your unit every other year.

If your property qualifies for a biennial inspection, you will be notified by Metro HRA.

SEND US YOUR PICTURES*

Wouldn't it be great to speed up the reinspection process? Well, now we can for many properties, by using a signed certification, picture, invoice or work order.* This process allows us to pass the unit in a matter of hours rather than returning to the unit. The quicker we can pass your unit, the timelier your payments are. This process saves time for the tenant and the housing authority, along with speeding up the inspection process and decreasing the delays in payment to the landlords.

*According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) not all properties can be passed using this certification. Some units require a re-inspection.



Outreach Corner by Abdiaziz Ibrahim

Time flies. It is hard to believe six months have elapsed since I began my work as Metro HRA outreach coordinator. For those of you not familiar with what I do, allow me to reintroduce myself. My role is to connect our program participants with landlords. This position was created to help us better serve our families and landlords. The essential elements that went into the creation of this program are:



- Housing search assistance
- Creating ready renters
- Ensuring great renter and property manager relations

MAKING AN IMPACT

Program participants appreciate the support:

“This whole process, he has kept me updated and has been patient with me calling him many times and emailing him. He has understood my families need (sic), and he did what he could to find it and to get all the things done we needed in a very quick, timely matter, insuring that my family had a place to move to considering our lease was up this month. I am so amazed at and applaud how efficient everything went and how much stress Abdiaziz took away. He is amazing and professional, and I truly think he is a great asset to Metro HRA.”

In October, Metro HRA had a booth at the annual Minnesota Multi-Housing Association fall exhibition held at the RiverCentre in St Paul. We reached out to more than 100 property owners, managers and small landlords on that single day. Our message to landlords was simple; we want to be partners in providing safe, decent and affordable housing to the more than 6,800 families we are currently assisting.

As an outreach coordinator, my obligation is to conduct housing search assistance for families who have difficulty finding landlords willing to rent to them. We have been successful in helping 25 families find new homes in the last five months.

We have listened to what landlords are saying and have streamlined our operations to address them. The steps to begin the process of working with the rent assistance

program are easy:

- Owner completes a request for tenancy approval for the family to turn into Metro HRA
- HRA will check for family affordability and will determine if the rent charged is reasonable according to area comparables
- HRA conducts a housing inspection to ensure unit meets health and safety standards
- HRA sends landlord a Housing Assistance Payment contract and a W-9 for signature
- Owner signs up for direct deposit and assistance check (optional)
- Owner signs lease with family
- Owner turns in all paperwork to HRA
- Payments begin to owner

If you are interested in becoming a landlord or have any questions, feel free to contact me at 651-602-1596. I would also encourage you to attend one of the upcoming information sessions described elsewhere in this newsletter.



Join the Landlord Loyalty Club

Learn more about HousingLink’s Landlord Loyalty Club and the benefits and resources available:

- Answer line to call, email, or text questions if you have a problem with a renter, need a referral to a vendor, or want answers to questions.
- Forums to ask and answer questions, and to interact with other landlords.
- Education with real estate credits. Learn how to become a better landlord or earn real estate credits at no cost.
- Special content, resources and social events throughout the year, just for members.

Details about joining can be found here: <http://www.housinglink.org/List/landlord-loyalty-club>

Information for Landlords

Go Green with AssistanceCheck

For your convenience, we are offering a secure, online service called AssistanceCheck. This 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 Housing Assistance Payment statements

You should have received a letter in the mail with your account PIN and easy setup instructions.

Helpful AssistanceCheck tips:

- Include client name
- Address of the property
- Providing enough information upfront will help us better serve you

If you need help setting up your account or have questions, contact Tammy Prigge @651-602-1525, or Ryan Klupacs @ 651-602-1388.

You can also access owner information at www.metrohra.org.

EPA Requires Certifications in Lead-Based Paint

As of April 22, 2010, anyone who performs renovations, repairs, or painting in pre-1978 housing or child-occupied facilities must be Lead-Safe Certified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) or an EPA-authorized state. Individuals and firms that are not certified could face fines of up to \$37,500 per day.

This Lead Renovator (RRP) Initial Certification course is eight hours in length and includes lead safety training approved by the EPA or applicable EPA-authorized state program. Any contractor performing qualifying work on pre-1978 homes or child-occupied facilities must employ at least one certified renovator who has successfully completed this training. Companies must also process an application to become a Lead Safe Certified Firm. The course concludes with a certification exam.

Metro HRA requires proof of certification before a unit will be reinspected and before a housing assistance payment will be made.



Learn about the Housing Choice Voucher Program

Would you like to know more about the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Rent Assistance program but don't know who to ask? The Metro HRA offers information meetings to provide owners and property managers with an opportunity to learn about our rent assistance program, ask questions, and network with other property owners.

Plan to attend one of the following meetings:

- **Tuesday, January 16**
10 to 11 a.m.
Metro HRA offices,
390 N. Robert St., St. Paul
- **Thursday, March 22**
2 to 3 p.m.
Metro HRA offices,
390 N. Robert St., St. Paul
- **Thursday, May 17**
2 to 3 p.m.
Metro HRA offices,
390 N. Robert St., St. Paul

Please register by emailing or calling Mary Dooher at mary.dooher@metc.state.mn.us or 651-602-1445.



METRO HRA

390 Robert Street North
Saint Paul, MN 55101-1805

News Briefs

UPDATE YOUR ADDRESS

The HRA requires your address to ensure correct information is reported for tax purposes. To report a change in physical address, please contact Lona at Lona.petersen@metc.state.mn.us or **651-602-1565**.

VENDOR NUMBERS

All correspondence you receive from the Metro HRA should now include a number specific to you which is called your “vendor number.” Please keep your vendor number handy and use it on all correspondence to the Metro HRA to ensure we can quickly identify you and provide 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.

THANK YOU, LANDLORDS

Thank you for your participation in the Metro HRA rent assistance program. By partnering with the Metro HRA, you help stabilize families while receiving a steady flow of rental revenue. Please spread the word to your fellow property owners and managers about the positive benefits of working with residents who receive rent assistance through Metro HRA or other housing programs.

Thank you for partnering with the HRA - we can’t house families without you.

SIGN UP FOR DIRECT DEPOSIT

Metro HRA encourages all landlords to enroll in the direct deposit system as a convenient option for receiving your monthly Housing Assistance Payment (HAP).

By offering direct deposit:

- Landlords have monthly HAP deposited directly into their bank account
- Delays due to mail or lost checks are eliminated

To request a direct deposit enrollment form or to make a change in your direct deposit arrangement, please contact Lona at Lona.Petersen@metc.state.mn.us or 651-602-1565

FAIR HOUSING QUESTIONS

Check out this website: <http://fairhousingmn.org/>