

A Newsletter for Housing Owners

METRO HRA

Housing & Redevelopment Authority

VIEWS



ARE YOU READY FOR SPRING?

Melting Snow and Rainy Days

Spring is just around the corner and with spring comes the melting snow, rain and storms. Are your gutters intact and cleaned out from last fall's debris? Are the down spouts in place to direct the water away from your home or buildings foundation? Are there any tree branches that should be trimmed or removed before the next storm does it for you and sends it onto the roof or through a window?



Windows, Screens and Doors

Are the windows functioning as designed, do they open and close with ease or do they slam shut? Minor adjustments and repairs ahead of time can reduce the risk of injury and your liability. Screens are required on at least one openable window in each room. All screens must be in good repair. Duct tape or other tape cannot be used to repair a hole in the screen however you can sew the tear. Are the doors weather tight to keep out the summer heat as well as it did the winter cold?

Weather Deferral

Were you granted a Weather Deferral in late 2012 early 2013 to allow you time to do an outdoor repair after the spring thaw? We will be following up on all Weather Deferrals in May. If work is not done and passed prior to the 31st of May we will be stopping payment effective June 1, 2013 and abating rent until the repairs are completed. We will not be paying any rent for the time that repairs were not done after June 1, 2013. To avoid delays in payments call **651-602-1626** as soon as repairs are completed.

SPRING 2013

DID YOU KNOW?

You can access a copy of the Metro HRA Owner's Handbook at **www.metrocouncil.org**. Go to Housing, Metro HRA, Landlords, Owner Handbook. It's packed with useful information.

VISIT US ON LINE

The Metropolitan Council has launched an updated website, please visit it at www.metrocouncil.org. We will be adding information for Landlords about the Metro HRA programs. We will also be adding forms and other helpful links for you to utilize. We are requesting that you give us your feedback about what you would like to see on our website as a landlord. Please email your suggestions to **mary.dooher@metc.state.mn.us**.

INSPECTIONS

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 your unit is not ready for an inspection when the inspector comes we will reschedule the inspection.

If the unit does fail, complete the repairs and call for a re-inspection right away to avoid late or prorated rent. Please be sure the repairs are completed **BEFORE** you call for a re-inspection.

Thank you for being proactive.

GARAGE SAFETY

By Dave Miles, HQS Inspector

Garages can be a potentially hazardous area for tenants and especially children. The garage may seem a fairly simple area, and you may not see anything dangerous. But take a closer look. There can be many unsafe items, and hidden dangers.

- If there is electric service to the garage, look at the outlets. Do all the outlets have cover plates on them? Curious little fingers love to poke around and could get shocked. Loose, unsupported and unstapled wiring to the outlets, are just asking to be grabbed by those same little hands.
- If there is electricity in the garage, there may also be a sub-panel containing breakers or fuses. Is there a door on front of the box? Are there any missing knock-outs along the edges of the box where those little fingers might get poked into?
- The lights on the ceiling and walls should be operational with bulbs installed in each socket. Open sockets are a shock hazard!
- Garages are perfect for storage. But be careful what you store in there. Old appliances such as dryers, refrigerators or freezers make a great “fort” for the kids to hide in. But what could happen when the appliance door shuts and a child is trapped inside?
- If the garage is attached to the house, most ordinances require a fire barrier wall between the house and garage. This usually consists of drywall, and a metal door equipped with automatic closer to prevent CO coming into the living space.

A garage door opener is the largest moving part in your home so it is important that it be inspected to ensure that it operates normally and safely. With so many operating parts you should look at all parts carefully to ensure proper operation and look for potential safety hazards.

Here are several of the areas to look at and tests you can perform to make sure that you do not overlook any issues:

- 1. Check the door for fatigue** - Look for damage or structural defects especially on older doors.
- 2. Emergency Release** - If a door comes down it can possibly trap a child or a small animal. There should be an emergency release cable to disengage the automatic operator and allow a homeowner to lift the door and release whoever is trapped.
- 3. Pressure Release** - With the door completely open place a 2x4 flat and close the door. As it hits the 2x4 it should sense the pressure and reverse direction.
- 4. Photo eyes** - Make sure the eyes are present on doors that have been installed since 1992 (if the date is known). These eyes should be located near the floor (generally within 4”-6”). With the door lowering, swing your leg or some other object between the photo eyes and the door should reverse.
- 5. Wall Button** - The button should be at least five feet above the standing surface and high enough to be out of reach of small children.



6. Safety Cables - Are the springs restrained by safety cables in the event that the springs break? If a spring breaks the safety cable will help to keep metal parts from flying through the air. Torsion springs will not need these safety cables as the torsion bar works as a containment device.

- Do the locks on the door(s) operate? Security is as important as tenant safety.
- Do not let garbage accumulate in the garage. Garbage attracts rodents and not only provides them with a meal, also provides those rats with a place to live, and raise their babies!
- Don't forget to look just outside the garage door too. Is the driveway apron sunken down and eroded away causing a trip hazard to anyone walking in? A simple patch job may be all it needs to remove that hazard.

Keep your garage safe and clean so your tenant will be safer, and happier and you will get fewer maintenance calls, or worse yet, calls from a lawyer.

CENTERPOINT ENERGY LOW-INCOME RENTAL CONSERVATION PROGRAM

A pilot low-income rental conservation program is available to landlords that rent to low-income tenants who live in 1-4 unit dwellings and who pay CenterPoint Energy for natural gas service. The pilot program is administered by the Energy CENTS Coalition (ECC), a



non-profit organization that promotes more affordable utility service. For the past ten years, ECC has administered conservation programs with partner organizations and contractors.

ECC is working with the Metropolitan Council to identify property owners who rent to low-income people and who may be interested in this program. Funds for this program are very limited and priority will be given to owners of duplexes and four-plexes and who agree to make a financial contribution to any recommended energy-related improvements.

CenterPoint Energy provides the funding for this program. Services may include:

- A free property energy assessment (provided by state-certified energy auditors)
- Furnace and water heater replacements
- Attic and wall insulation and air sealing

Your property may qualify for services under this program if:

- Your tenants are low-income, CenterPoint Energy customers and live in 1-4 unit properties
- Your property has older, inefficient HVAC equipment
- Your property is inadequately insulated
- You are willing to make a financial contribution to any recommended energy improvements (typically, ECC asks for a contribution of one-half the cost of any furnace or water heater replacement and 25% of insulation costs)

Steps for applying for this program include:

- Contact ECC for income guidelines and to complete a survey about your properties
- Once the survey is complete, ECC will send you program applications for your tenants
- Return completed applications to ECC; ECC will determine eligibility and obtain energy usage information from CenterPoint Energy CENTS Coalition
- If energy usage in your property is high, you will be contacted to schedule an energy audit
- When energy audit is complete, ECC will contact you to review the recommendations and to discuss cost-sharing
- When your financial contribution is received, ECC's HVAC and insulation contractors will contact you to schedule the work

Please contact Lois Gunderson at loisg24@centurytel.net or **612-991-3155** for more program information and to obtain a program survey.

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 Maika Boeckel to provide your current e-mail address. She can be reached at:

maika.boeckel@metc.state.mn.us

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 accurate information.

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.

GO GREEN

Would you like to receive the Metro HRA Newsletter and other important information electronically? Please send your name, property name, phone number and e-mail address to:

mary.dooher@metc.state.mn.us



METRO HRA

390 Robert Street North
Saint Paul, MN 55101-1805

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 14, 2013, 2:00 p.m.**
- **August 13, 2013, 10:00 a.m.**
- **November 12, 2013, 2:00 p.m.**

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

DIRECT DEPOSIT

Metro HRA provides all landlords the opportunity to enroll in the direct deposit system as a convenient payment option for receipt of your Housing Assistance Payment (HAP). 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 eliminate 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 Maika Boeckel at: maika.boeckel@metc.state.mn.us or **651-602-1526**

FREE ADVERTISING OPPORTUNITY

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.