



BC Housing

TENANT

HANDBOOK



**BRITISH
COLUMBIA**

BC Housing is an agency of
the provincial government

Third Edition - September 2005



WELCOME TO

BC HOUSING



www.bchousing.org



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section	Page
Important Telephone Numbers	III
Introduction	1
The Public Housing Advisory Council	1
About BC Housing	2
Roles of Property Management Staff	5
Your Tenant Rent Contribution	6
How To Pay Your Tenant Rent Contribution (TRC)	6
How Is Your Tenant Rent Contribution Calculated?	7
Annual Review Process	7
Your New Home	8
Moving In	8
Keys & Locks	9
Parking	9
Insurance	9
Renovations & Alterations	10
Basements & Storage Areas	10
Yards & Balconies	10
Pets	11
Cable, Telephone & Satellite Dishes	11
Hydro & Gas	11
Smoking	12
Common Areas	12
Guests	12
Laundry Rooms	13
Pest Control	13
Garbage & Recycling	14
Noise & Disturbances	15
Moving Out	15

Section	Page
Safety	15
Protect Yourself & Your Home	15
Fire Safety	16
Be Prepared for an Earthquake	17
Crime Free Multi-Housing Program	18
Your Fire Escape Plan	31
Conflicts & Complaints	19
Transfers	21
Care of Your Home	22
Appliances	23
Bathrooms	23
Conserving Energy	24
Vandalism	25
Maintenance & Repairs	25
Making A Request For Maintenance & Repairs	25
Preventative Maintenance	26
What To Do If You Have Maintenance Issues	26
Tenant Groups	27
Tenant Programs and Communications	27
Community Programs	29
Your Rights	29
Tenancy Agreement	29
Residential Tenancy Act	29
Human Rights	30



Use this page to log...

IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Building Manager / Site Representative:

Work days and hours:

Property Portfolio Manager:

Property Portfolio Assistant:

Site Representative (if applicable):

Additional Numbers:

Public Housing Advisory Council: 604-439-8572

Outside the Lower Mainland:
1-800-257-7756, Local 8572

Community Development Officers: 604-433-1711

Outside the Lower Mainland:
1-800-257-7756



24-hour Emergency Maintenance Numbers:

1. Lower Mainland 604-682-4852

2. Vancouver Island Region 250-213-8798

3. Southern Interior Region 250-493-0301

(This is the office number. The after hours answering service will redirect your emergency call.)

4. Northern Interior Region - Prince Rupert

For tenants of Harbour View Gardens,

Pineridge Terrace and Moresby Townhouses: 250-624-2331

(Building Manager's number)

or 250-627-7501

(Office for on-call person)

For tenants of Sunset Villa Apartments: 250-627-8124

(Building Manager's number)

or 250-627-7501

(Office for on-call person)

For tenants of Mariposa Gardens

and Cedar Ridge Townhouses: 250-624-2013

(Building Manager's number)

or 250-627-7501

(Office for on-call person)

5. Northern Interior Region - Prince George 250-562-9251

(This is the office number. The after hours answering service will redirect your emergency call.)



INTRODUCTION

This Tenant Handbook has been prepared to provide you with an understanding of the approach and policies that BC Housing follows to help make your home a safe, affordable and comfortable place to live. The first edition of the Handbook was published in 1996, with valuable input provided by the Public Housing Advisory Council and a group of tenants from a variety of BC Housing developments in the Lower Mainland. This edition reflects changes introduced since 1996 in policy, procedures and terminology.

The Tenant Handbook does not include detailed information for specific locations. However, it does provide you with a good overview of how BC Housing operates, as well as what is required of you as a tenant.

We suggest that you keep this Handbook in a convenient place for future reference. If you have further suggestions or ideas to offer us for future editions, please feel free to do so by contacting your Property Portfolio Manager.



THE PUBLIC HOUSING ADVISORY COUNCIL

Mission:

The Public Housing Advisory Council is a volunteer group of elected tenant representatives from across the province that work with BC Housing to enhance the well-being of tenant communities. The council fosters tenant development and advises BC Housing on policy decisions.



Strategic Goals:

1. To achieve better communication between the council and tenants at large.
2. To become a more effective body.
3. To expand tenant involvement in their communities.
4. To provide constructive tenant input at appropriate levels of BC Housing.
5. To work in partnership with other social housing advocates.

Council members believe in strengthening the spirit of public housing communities. Your community may have a tenant association, a social club or individuals that organize special events. You are encouraged to get involved in the events and take an active role in your community. And, you are invited to consider running for the Public Housing Advisory Council in the future.

The council represents tenants. You may contact the council to discuss any questions you might have, and they will keep your request confidential. The council may be reached at phac@bchousing.org or by calling 604-439-8572 or toll-free at 1-800-257-7756 (ext. 8572).

ABOUT BC HOUSING

The British Columbia Housing Management Commission (BC Housing) is a Crown agency of the provincial government that develops and manages subsidized housing throughout the province. BC Housing works in partnership with private and non-profit housing providers, community agencies, other levels of government and provincial health authorities to provide affordable housing and support services for people in the greatest need – such as frail seniors, people with mental illness, physical disabilities and drug and alcohol addictions, individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, including women with their children fleeing abusive relationships.



Types of Social Housing

In British Columbia, there are approximately 75,000 units of social housing – built and managed under a variety of federal, federal/provincial and provincial housing programs.

The different types of social housing include:

Directly-managed housing

Your home is one of approximately 7,800 units BC Housing directly manages in 49 communities throughout the province. BC Housing selects tenants for these buildings from The Housing Registry – a database of applicants seeking affordable housing in British Columbia. The database also lists some of the non-profit and co-operative housing providers available in the province.

Non-profit housing

This type of rental housing is owned and operated by community-based non-profit societies. Non-profit housing providers select tenants through either their own waitlists or through The Housing Registry. Most of these societies receive some form of financial assistance from government to enable them to offer affordable rents.

Co-operative housing

In a co-operative housing development residents own shares in the building and pay housing charges rather than rent. Members are expected to participate in the co-op's operation. BC Housing provides housing charge subsidies for some people living in housing co-operatives.

Assisted living

Assisted living units are self-contained apartments for seniors or people with disabilities who need some support services to continue living independently, but do not need 24-hour



facility care. In many instances, the local provincial health authority provides the appropriate support services for these tenants. Applicants for this type of housing need a medical referral from their local health authority.

Emergency housing

This includes short-stay housing of 30 days or less and emergency shelters that provide single or shared bedrooms or dorm-type sleeping arrangements, in addition to varying levels of support services for individuals.

Transitional housing

This is also called second-stage housing and is available for 30 days and up to two or three years. It includes on- or off-site support services to help people move towards independence and self-sufficiency.

Rental assistance

BC Housing also provides targeted rent assistance to lower income families, seniors and people with physical, mental or psychiatric disabilities, who are renting in the private market. This includes programs such as the Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER) in which residents are reimbursed for a portion of their rent if it is more than 30 per cent of their income. Eligible renters must be 60 years of age or older, live in B.C. and not be in receipt of any other income assistance.

If You Require More Information

If you have questions about your rent, or would like information on BC Housing programs or services in your community, please call Housing Operations at 604-433-1711 or 1-800-257-7756 outside the Lower Mainland, or your regional or area office. Information can also be found at <http://www.bchousing.org/> online.



ROLES OF PROPERTY MANAGEMENT STAFF

In buildings managed by BC Housing in the Lower Mainland, Victoria, Prince George and Prince Rupert, you may meet the following people:

Property Portfolio Manager (PPM) - Before you move in, your PPM helps you to complete your tenancy forms and calculates how much rent you will pay. PPMs also work with tenants to resolve problems related to their tenancies. Each Property Portfolio Manager handles a group of BC Housing buildings (called a portfolio) like the one you live in.

Property Portfolio Assistant (PPA) – PPAs work closely with PPMs and Building Managers.

Building Manager Supervisor – The Building Manager Supervisor supervises on-site staff and assists in resolving tenant concerns and complaints.

Building Manager – Building Managers handle day-to-day maintenance jobs and cleaning in common areas like the hallways, community lounges and laundry rooms (in buildings that have laundry equipment). They also help prepare empty suites for new tenants. Your Building Manager is the person to call when you have a question or request. Most Building Managers live in the buildings for which they are responsible, while a few live off-site and come to the building during their regular work hours.

Maintenance Staff – The maintenance staff are called in when you need something in your home repaired. For example, they deal with leaky pipes, re-hanging closet doors and some appliance repairs. They also handle repairs in common areas.

Janitor – The janitors in your building provide cleaning services in the common areas, such as lobbies, hallways and amenity rooms. They also clean up the common areas outside, picking up litter or shovelling snow. The janitors help your Building Manager prepare empty suites before new tenants move in.



Site Representative - In many communities in the Northern Interior, the Southern Interior and on Vancouver Island, your day-to-day contact will be with a local Site Representative. This person keeps the properties well-maintained, collects rents and is the local community contact for BC Housing tenants and applicants.

YOUR TENANT RENT CONTRIBUTION

How To Pay Your Tenant Rent Contribution (TRC)

Your TRC must be paid on or before the first day of each month. Regional and area offices have the debit card system and are open Monday to Friday between 8:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. You may pay by:

- 1. Pre-Authorized Rent Payment System (PARP).** With this option, you may pay your TRC by arranging to have automatic monthly bank withdrawals from your account. Contact your regional office for more information.
- 2. Debit Card.** All regional and area offices have the debit card system.
- 3. Online Payment.** With this option, you may pay your TRC through the Internet. Contact your regional office for more information.
- 4. Cheque.** If you choose this option, you may either submit a cheque each month to your regional or area office or send post-dated cheques for one year to the office. Please write your name, address and unit number on your cheques, and mail or deliver them to your regional office or Site Representative.
- 5. Cash.** This is not a recommended option. However, if you must pay with cash, please bring the money to your regional office. Do not send cash in the mail, because it could be lost or stolen. Building Managers cannot accept cash on-site.



Please note that if you are unable to pay your TRC on time, you must contact your Property Portfolio Manager or Property Portfolio Assistant in writing with reasons before the first of the month and arrange for a re-payment agreement to be signed. If your rent is not paid by the first of the month and no agreement has been arranged, you will be issued a Notice to End Tenancy. (*Refer to your Tenancy Agreement.*)

How Is Your Tenant Rent Contribution Calculated?

For tenants who pay ‘rent geared to income’ - or RGI - your monthly TRC is 30 per cent of your total household income (which means 30 per cent of the income from everyone living in your home), subject to minimum rents.

We look at income, source of income, assets, family size and whether someone is a student when we assess the amount of your TRC. For example, student scholarships are not included as a source of income while wages and provincial income assistance are. Check with your PPM or PPA for more information on what types of income are and/or are not included, and for details on the TRC calculation process.

A change to your family size or income could affect your TRC. Please notify your Property Portfolio Manager or Property Portfolio Assistant immediately of any change to your family size or significant income changes (e.g., source of income such as employment, employment insurance, income assistance or change in the amount of income). Your PPM or PPA will advise whether your TRC will be adjusted at that time.

Annual Review Process

Once each year, you need to complete a “Declaration of Income & Assets” (DIA) form. We’ll send it to you in the mail.

On the form, provide us with your current financial and household information, and attach any documents that provide proof of your stated income. For example, let us know if your



employment has changed or whether you are going to school. You must also report any changes to your savings or assets such as real estate, stocks, bonds or RRSPs. And tell us if there has been a birth, death, marriage (including common-law), separation or divorce, or if any of your children have moved out.

Under the terms of your Tenancy Agreement, you are responsible for paying the TRC established for your unit, which is based on the information provided in your Declaration form. It is very important that you fill out this form. Failure to do so means that you could lose your rent subsidy and receive a *Notice to End Tenancy* (NET). This is the start of the eviction process. (*Refer to your Tenancy Agreement for more information.*)

If you have any questions or need help filling out the Declaration form, please phone your regional or area office, between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday to Friday.

Use the self-addressed envelope enclosed with the form we send you. Mail it back to us, or drop it off at your BC Housing regional or area office.

YOUR NEW HOME

Moving In

Your Property Portfolio Manager will let you know what day you may move into your new home. When you go to the building to pick up your keys, the Building Manager will complete a move-in inspection. Please contact your Building Manager to arrange a time for your move in. This allows building staff to schedule other moves that day appropriately so that the elevators and hallways won’t be too busy. Move-in hours are from 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.



Keys & Locks

We will install a new lock on your door before you move in and give you keys for your unit, the front door of the building, your mailbox and the garage, as necessary. Please note that we have to charge a replacement fee if you lose any of your keys.

We keep master keys to all BC Housing units to ensure tenants' safety in the event of an emergency. *You must not change your locks or add security devices without prior written approval from BC Housing staff. (Refer to your Tenancy Agreement.)*

If you need your lock changed, please ask your Building Manager. If you are locked out of your building, you can call your Building Manager to let you in. **Please note that we may charge a fee for these services.**

Parking

You will find that tenant parking is available at most BC Housing locations. There are conditions to be followed, such as vehicles must be licensed for the road and be in running order. It may also be necessary to “register” your vehicle to obtain a parking space and decal. It is important to check with your Building Manager for your development's tenant and visitor parking provisions. *(Refer to your Tenancy Agreement.)*

Insurance

BC Housing insures the buildings only, not tenants' belongings. Although you are not required to purchase contents insurance, we recommend that you do so to protect your belongings in case of fire, theft, earthquake or other damage. *Please note that you are required to carry a minimum of \$100,000.00 waterbed liability insurance if you have a waterbed. (Refer to your Tenancy Agreement or contact your Property Portfolio Manager for more information.)*



Renovations & Alterations

BC Housing upgrades tenants' units and buildings as required. For example, in some of the older developments, we have renovated kitchens, installed new windows and doors, upgraded elevators and replaced hallway carpeting. We plan ahead for this type of work, and will let you know well in advance of any renovations planned for your building. Please note that tenants are not permitted to renovate or alter their units without prior written permission from their Property Portfolio Manager. Renovations and alterations include painting, wallpapering, changing the flooring, installing a satellite dish and making structural changes. *(Refer to your Tenancy Agreement.)*

Basements & Storage Areas

Some townhouses have basements or storage areas. If your home has a basement or storage area, it must not be used as a sleeping area. Most basements and storage areas do not have proper fire exits or ventilation, so using them as bedrooms violates fire regulations, and in the event of a fire, could endanger your family.

Yards & Balconies

If you live in a townhouse with a fenced-in yard, it's your responsibility to mow the grass and weed the garden. If you have outside water taps, ensure you shut them off *inside your unit* before winter starts. Your Building Manager can show you where the shut-off is located if you're not sure. BC Housing staff will shovel snow from the city sidewalks but it is your responsibility to shovel the walkway and steps to your unit.

If you live in an apartment building, your balcony must not be used for storage. *(Refer to your Tenancy Agreement.)* **Barbecues – whether charcoal or propane – are not permitted on your balcony because the fumes and burning coals are a potential health or fire hazard.** Please note that in the winter, you should clear any snow from your balcony because accumulated melting snow could leak under the door into your home.



Please note that birdfeeders and bird feeding are not permitted for health reasons.

Pets

BC Housing permits you to have one dog or one cat in most of its buildings. If you own a pet or get one after moving in, you must register it with BC Housing. Registration forms are available from your Building Manager or regional office. The Pet Regulations that are provided with your Tenancy Agreement outline the types of pets that are permitted and not permitted (e.g. certain dog breeds and certain exotic pets) and describe your responsibilities as a pet owner. (*Refer to your Tenancy Agreement.*)

If you live in a high-rise apartment building, one of the elevators may be designated as a “no pets” elevator. This restriction is for the protection of tenants who have allergies to animals. High-rise buildings may also restrict types of pets to certain floors, for example, small dogs on floors 1 - 3, cats on floors 1 - 7, caged birds or aquariums no floor restrictions. Check with your Building Manager or Property Portfolio Manager for pet rules in your building.

It is your responsibility to remove all waste deposited by your pet within the common areas of the development. Please remember that pets must be on a leash and with a responsible person when not inside their units.

Cable, Telephone & Satellite Dishes

Most buildings have individual cable hook-ups, and tenants are responsible for contacting their local cable and telephone companies to arrange for connection and payment. Satellite dishes cannot be attached to the building.

Hydro & Gas

In most buildings, tenants are responsible for paying for their own hydro and/or gas. Your Property Portfolio Manager or Property



Portfolio Assistant will provide a hydro application form for you to complete during your sign-up meeting. In the buildings where bulk hydro is provided, a hydro surcharge is included in the rent.

Smoking

Smoking is not permitted in any of the building’s common areas and, in some developments, may be allowed only in designated areas outside. However, smoking is permitted in individual units. If you are a smoker, and maintenance staff must come to your unit for any repair work, you will be asked not to smoke inside your home for one hour before they arrive and while the work is being carried out, as per Workers Compensation Board (WCB) regulations.

Common Areas

Most of our larger buildings have common rooms that tenant groups and individual tenants can use for recreation and meetings. If there’s a tenant association or social committee at your building, you can get in touch with the group’s contact person to schedule your activity. If not, your Building Manager or Property Portfolio Manager can let you know about the availability or use of the community space in your building.

It is the tenant’s responsibility to ensure safe and reasonable use of all common areas by household members and guests. (*Refer to your Tenancy Agreement.*)

Guests

Your guests may stay with you for a total of 14 days in a one-year period. If you want or need to plan a longer visit by guests, you must obtain written approval in advance of the visit from your Property Portfolio Manager. (*Refer to your Tenancy Agreement.*)



Laundry Rooms

Buildings that have laundry rooms are available for use by registered tenants only. If your building has laundry facilities, a laundry surcharge is included in the rent. Your Building Manager will demonstrate how to use the machines. We ask that you:

- Check with your Building Manager whether there is a laundry schedule, and if so, when you can use the machines. In most buildings the laundry room hours are limited to particular hours so the machines aren't in use too early in the morning or too late at night.
- Check for posted laundry room regulations.
- Clean around the drum and exterior of the washing machine after you've used it, and remove the lint from the lint screen in the dryer after each use.
- Report any washer or dryer that isn't working to the company that provides these machines. The company contact information is posted in the laundry room. If the company information isn't provided, please inform your Property Portfolio Manager or Property Portfolio Assistant of the problem.

Pest Control

Pests, particularly insects, may become a problem in your home. BC Housing has an extermination program to control pests. If you discover cockroaches or other bugs in your unit, advise your Building Manager. We may have to spray the units in the building to keep the bugs under control. If we have to spray, you'll receive a notice that explains what must be done before any treatment can be completed.

You can reduce the incidence of pests by keeping food stored in glass, metal or hard plastic containers with tight-fitting lids. **We recommend that you clean behind and under the fridge and stove every six months.** Ask your Building Manager for assistance if you cannot move the appliances yourself.



If you live in a townhouse, you may need to control mice and rats as well. You need to keep them from coming into your home and from finding food scraps around the building. You can:

- keep your dry goods (flours, cereals, sugars, etc.) in glass, metal or hard plastic containers with tight-fitting lids;
- keep your garbage, including recyclables, in tight closing, hard containers;
- block any holes in your deck or foundation;
- stuff steel wool into holes around water pipes that can be found in the kitchen and bathroom;
- keep the grass and shrubs in your yard trimmed; and
- make sure the drain cover on your basement drain is securely in place.

Garbage & Recycling

If you live in a larger apartment building, you may have a garbage chute on each floor. If so, please put your garbage in bags that are small enough to fit easily into the chute, so they won't get stuck and block it. Try not to use the chute late at night or early in the morning, because the noise could disturb your neighbours.

Please make sure your garbage is not dripping any liquid on the floor when you carry it down the hallway.

If you live in a townhouse or smaller apartment building, check with your Building Manager to find out if you should put your garbage out for regular pick up (and when), or into garbage bins.

Also, contact your Building Manager for information about a recycling program at your development. Where recycling programs are in effect, please don't put glass, newspapers, coat hangers, cardboard, clothing or rope into the garbage bins or down the chute. Instead, recycle these items appropriately.



Noise & Disturbances

You and your neighbours are entitled to privacy and quiet enjoyment of your homes. Please ensure that you, your household members and guests live in a manner that does not have a negative impact on your neighbours. Please note that excessive noise and disturbances may lead to action against your tenancy. (*Refer to your Tenancy Agreement.*)

Moving Out

When you decide to move out, you need to give your Property Portfolio Manager a written notice. Hand in your notice no later than the last day of the month, one month before you plan to move, for example, by 4:30 p.m. on March 31ST for an April 30TH move-out. (*Refer to your Tenancy Agreement.*)

Your Building Manager will make an appointment with you to inspect your unit before you leave and will give you a list of the cleaning you have to do before moving out. You must leave the unit as clean as it was when you moved in. Except for normal wear and tear, any damage to your unit is your responsibility. Repairs may be charged to you. (*Refer to your Tenancy Agreement.*)

You must be moved out by 1:00 p.m. on the last day of the month. It is your responsibility to return all keys, the laundry card and sign the move-out inspection form.

SAFETY

Protect Yourself & Your Home

Don't let strangers follow you into the building as you enter. If your building has an intercom, ensure your guests use it when visiting you. When you receive a call on the intercom, never let someone in if you do not know that person.



Only let workers come into the building or your unit if you know they should be there (for example, notices have been posted) and they have proper identification.

If you see strangers loitering around the building, please contact your Building Manager or the police. If you observe suspected criminal activity, do not attempt to intervene, phone the police immediately.

Fire Safety

Here are some fire safety tips to protect your home and your family:

- Do not store flammable materials such as paint thinner, solvents, propane tanks or gasoline inside your home or attached storage.
- Regularly recycle old newspapers because they are a fire hazard if you let them stack up.
- Make sure you know what to do in case of fire. If you live in an apartment building, you will find fire safety and evacuation information posted on each floor. You can also obtain fire safety information from your Building Manager.
- If you live in a townhouse, draw a floor plan of your unit on the Fire Escape Plan that is on the back cover of this handbook.
- Make sure you know at least two ways out of the building in case one escape route is blocked by fire. Plan these escape routes with your household members so everyone knows how to exit the building safely.
- If you hear a fire alarm you should always leave the building right away. Follow your fire escape plan.
- If a fire breaks out in your home, evacuate to safety, activate the fire alarm, and call the fire department.



- Call your Building Manager if the smoke alarm in your home goes off frequently. This alarm is wired, so you don't need to replace a battery. We will inspect it annually. ***Do not remove or disable the smoke alarm.***
- By keeping your stove, oven and toaster clean so they don't smoke, you can help prevent setting the alarm off. Also, use the exhaust fan when cooking to reduce the possibility of "false alarms" and never leave cooking food unattended.
- Leave fire fighting to the local fire department. Only use a fire extinguisher if you have been trained. If you want to learn how to use a fire extinguisher, you can phone your local fire department.
- Do not prop open fire doors or disable automatic door closers, as you place both yourself and your neighbours in danger in the event of a fire.
- Do not overload power outlets. A 'power bar' with a shut-off feature can protect your electrical appliances.

Be Prepared For An Earthquake

If you live in an area where an earthquake could happen, you can prepare your family ahead of time:

- Know the safe places in your home. You will be safest against an inside wall, under a strong table, desk or away from falling objects.
- Know that dangerous areas are near windows, mirrors, hanging pictures or plants, tall furniture and ceiling fixtures.
- Keep an emergency supply kit with a minimum three-day supply of food (especially foods that don't require cooking, such as energy bars, fruit, cheeses, peanut butter – if not allergic to – and crackers), bottled water and clothing. Also include a first aid kit, flashlight, extra batteries, a portable battery-operated radio and any required medications.



If there's an earthquake and you're at home, you should:

- **Remain** calm.
- **Drop** – under or near something sturdy...
- **Cover** – your head to protect it...
- **Hold** – on to a sturdy object like the table legs...
- After the shaking stops, wait 30 seconds before moving.
- Check yourself and your family for injuries.
- Listen to the radio for information and instructions.
- Be aware of overhead dangers if you go outside.
- Assist neighbours wherever possible.

BC Housing staff are trained in how to respond during an earthquake. If there is an earthquake, they will be able to assess any damage to your building. They may need your help if you are able to assist them.

Check the Information Section of your local telephone directory for more information on first aid and preparing for an earthquake.

Crime Free Multi-Housing Program

BC Housing has participated in Crime Free Multi-Housing training offered by the BC Crime Prevention Association. The program is designed to help residents, owners and managers of rental property, in co-operation with the police, to keep illegal activity away from rental properties. The result of the team effort is a safer, more habitable environment in which to live.

The program recommends the use of the Residential Tenancy Agreement Addendum for Crime Free Housing. Since 1998, all new BC Housing tenants sign the Crime Free Housing Addendum when they move in. The Addendum states that:



The tenant(s), any occupant of the tenant(s)' household, and any persons invited onto the residential property or residential premise by the tenant(s) or any member of the tenant's family shall not engage in any criminal activity on the premises or property including, but not limited to:

- (a) any drug-related criminal activity
- (b) solicitation (sex trade workers and related nuisance activity)
- (c) street gang activity
- (d) assault or threatened assault
- (e) unlawful use of a firearm
- (f) any criminal activity that threatens the health, safety or welfare of the landlord, other tenants or persons on the residential property or residential premises.

A single violation of any of the provisions of this addendum shall be deemed a serious violation and material non-compliance with the Residential Tenancy Agreement. *(Please refer to the Crime Free Multi-housing Addendum attached to your Tenancy Agreement.)*

CONFLICTS & COMPLAINTS

If you're involved in a conflict with another resident try to resolve the issue with them before seeking external measures for resolution. If you are unable to resolve an issue as it relates to your tenancy, contact your Property Portfolio Manager **in writing**. Please note: written complaints must be dated and signed and should state the facts ("who, what, when, where"), rather than your judgments, opinions or conclusions.

Below are some methods for resolving a conflict. Negotiation and mediation are usually the best because they give you, and the person with whom you have a conflict with, an opportunity to decide your own solution. Conciliation is successful only when the "go-between" is an effective communicator. Arbitration and



eviction take decision-making away from you and give it to an arbitrator or BC Housing staff person.

- 1. Negotiation:** Talk about the issue directly with the other person. Use sensitive communication techniques such as "I" statements. "I have a hard time sleeping when your dog barks in the middle of the night" would probably produce a better result than "You'd better shut that dog up or else." Try to reach a solution you can both live with – it will most likely require compromise on both sides.
- 2. Conciliation:** A neutral third party acts as a go-between to explain each person's side of the story to the other and to arrive at a resolution to the dispute. This method is successful only when the third party is truly neutral and trusted by both sides, has excellent listening and speaking skills and is able to fairly represent both parties.
- 3. Mediation:** If negotiation and/or conciliation are unsuccessful, you can report this to your Property Portfolio Manager and request information regarding mediation. He/she will ask you questions about the conflict, explain how mediation works, and determine whether mediation might work in your situation.
- 4. Arbitration:** If negotiation, conciliation and mediation fail, and if the conflict is having a negative impact on the housing development as a whole, an independent arbitrator may be hired to hear both sides and make a ruling that will be binding on all parties. Or, at this point, the PPM might refer you to the Residential Tenancy Office, which deals with disputes between tenants and landlords, or the Ombudsman's Office, which deals with disputes between individuals and the provincial government or its agencies.
- 5. Eviction:** This is the last resort and is used only if the tenancy agreement is breached. *(Refer to your Tenancy Agreement.)*



TRANSFERS

BC Housing receives many requests each year from tenants wishing to transfer to another unit or another building. There are no guarantees whether a transfer will be approved or how long it will take as transfers are evaluated along with new applications for housing.

Basic Transfer Eligibility Criteria

- have lived in unit for a minimum of one year
- tenancy is in good standing
- have no outstanding debts including chargebacks, rent arrears or audit arrears
- still meet basic eligibility requirements for housing, and
- one of the following transfer reasons outlined below

BC Housing may approve a transfer if:

- Your place of employment or schooling has changed and transportation is either unavailable when you need it, or your commute is more than three hours round-trip. *Please note that you need to provide a letter of employment or school registration verification;*
- A change to your household size or composition requires a different size unit (over-housed tenants are required to move to an appropriately-sized unit);
- You or a family member have a medical condition that would be stabilized or improved by a change of location. *Please note that your physician must provide documentation that supports the need for a medical transfer;* or
- You or a household member's well-being is at serious risk from trauma, violence, harassment or other undesirable consequences. Please note that you will need to provide supporting documentation from the police or an appropriate social agency.



If you would like to transfer and/or are unsure of your eligibility for a transfer, please contact your Property Portfolio Manager who can advise you regarding your options. If you are behind in your rent payment or owe BC Housing any money when you are offered a transfer, it is expected that all outstanding charges will be paid in full before you transfer. Your transfer may be cancelled or put on hold until all outstanding charges are paid in full.

CARE OF YOUR HOME

It's your responsibility to keep your home safe and clean. (*Refer to your Tenancy Agreement.*)

Please leave common areas like the hallways, laundry rooms and grounds clean for other tenants. Remember that children and pets should not play in the hallways, elevators, laundry rooms, locker rooms or underground parking garages. And if your children keep bicycles in your home, please make sure they do not ride them inside.

Picture hooks, rather than nails or screws, must be used to hang wall decorations.

BC Housing requests that you not use liquid bleach to clean. It is harsh on the environment and can also damage building materials, such as carpets. Instead, use alternatives such as washing soda powder.

And please remember that any alterations or renovations to your unit must be approved in writing and in advance, by your Property Portfolio Manager.



Appliances

Many refrigerators are frost-free and do not need to be defrosted. If your fridge isn't, we suggest you clean and defrost it regularly to keep it in good condition and save energy. Do not use knives or ice picks to scrape the ice off because they can damage the freezer and you will be charged with repair costs. And do not put a kettle or pot filled with boiling water in the freezer to melt the ice, because the heat could also melt the plastic parts.

Use a mild soapy solution to clean the smooth surfaces of appliances, and for grease and dirt, try a paste made from baking soda and water. Please do not use abrasive cleaning products because they will damage the surfaces of your appliances. You can use oven cleanser products for cleaning your oven.

Bathrooms

Please use a gentle non-abrasive cleaner on bathtubs, sinks and toilets. A rough cleaner will scratch the surface and make the fixtures harder to keep clean.

You have a condensation problem in your bathroom if there are symptoms such as:

- condensation on the fixtures, windows or walls;
- mould and mildew between ceramic tiles, in the corners or on the ceiling;
- peeling paint; rotting, blackened window sills; damaged drywall under windows; curling floor tiles; musty smells; or water dripping from vents.

Condensation is caused by:

- excessive house humidity;
- moisture from hot baths and showers;
- dampness from wet bath mats, towels and drying clothes;
- inadequate ventilation;



- uninsulated vent ducts;
- paint or wallpaper not designed for use in bathrooms; and
- cold outside air leaking through insulation.

While you can't change the structural causes, there are a number of things you can do to reduce condensation:

- turn on the bathroom fan or open the bathroom window while you are showering or bathing. Be sure to keep the fan running or window open until the condensation has evaporated;
- turn on the heat lamp during your bath or shower;
- keep the kitchen fan on, or a kitchen window open, while cooking and washing dishes.

NOTE: It costs less to heat dry air than wet air, so keeping a window slightly open or the fan running will result in smaller hydro bills for you and your family.

Conserving Energy

All of us can cut the cost of heating and electrical bills by conserving energy. At BC Housing, we keep the heat turned down to a safe minimum temperature in stairwells. We use energy efficient lights in many buildings, and we put in weather stripping around doorways and windows to reduce drafts.

If your residence has a de-humidistat, please consult with your building manager to ensure that you are following the recommended operating guidelines.

Here are some ways you can save energy in your home:

- When it's cold out, keep the temperature at 20 degrees Celsius (if you have a thermostat in your unit). You can lower the temperature at night or when you won't be at home. If you can't control the heat in your unit, please let your Building Manager know if it is too hot or too cold in the winter. Do not turn the heat off if you will be away during winter.



- Turn off the lights in rooms that are not being used and whenever you leave a room. Wherever possible, use energy efficient 40-watt or 60-watt light bulbs.
- Keep your refrigerator on a medium or low setting.

VANDALISM

Vandalism to elevators, stairwells and hallways can result in costly repairs. Graffiti on brickwork is difficult to remove and is very unsightly. We ask that you call the police right away and tell your Building Manager or Property Portfolio Manager if you see anyone damaging BC Housing property.

MAINTENANCE & REPAIRS

Making A Request For Maintenance & Repairs

Please inform building staff of a maintenance problem by filling out a maintenance request form which can be obtained from your Building Manager's office. You must complete and sign the form before staff can schedule the repair work. If you don't sign the form, the Maintenance staff cannot enter your unit.

When you sign the Tenancy Agreement for your home, you'll receive a list of the working hours for your Building Manager or Site Representative, Janitor and Maintenance staff. If you have a serious problem after hours, phone the 24-hour Emergency Maintenance number in your area (listed on page iv). This number is only for maintenance *emergencies* such as a flood, an elevator breakdown, power or heat system failure, a broken window or a leaking roof.



Preventative Maintenance

BC Housing is committed to providing safe housing for its tenants. Therefore, BC Housing staff from time-to-time may need to conduct repairs and preventative maintenance in your suite to ensure it remains healthy and safe. BC Housing will make every effort to minimize the disruption while repairs and preventative maintenance are underway.

BC Housing, in compliance with the Worker's Compensation Board (WCB) requirements and other workplace safety practices, takes precautionary measures to protect persons in and around the work site while maintenance or repair activities occur. These could include high-level work, floor/railing repairs, mould management, and the removal of airborne dust particles, low-levels of asbestos, insects, rodents and lead products.

You may see BC Housing staff or contractors utilize tools and wear special clothing to protect themselves from workplace hazards they may encounter as part of their work activities. You may also see the posting of warning or caution signs. For your safety and the safety of others, please respect these signs.

We may need to ask you to be absent from your suite while repairs are underway.

Please be assured that BC Housing staff will clean up all their materials and ensure the suite is safe before you return.

What To Do If You Have Maintenance Issues

First, talk with your Building Manager if you have a problem with your home or a repair is required. If there has been property damage or an injury, the Building Manager will complete an Incident Report and may require specific details from you.

Second, *if necessary*, contact your Property Portfolio Manager. The PPM is the person to speak to if you have a complaint about an ongoing maintenance issue or an on-site staff member.



TENANT GROUPS

Many BC Housing buildings have tenant associations, social committees or tenants who organize special events. Ask your Building Manager if there's such a group in your building. If not, and you're interested in organizing tenant activities, phone the Public Housing Advisory Council or a Community Development Officer (see page iii) for information. They can help you identify the most appropriate type of organization for your building.

Some tenant associations and social committees promote social, educational and recreational development by providing information, resources and referrals. More specifically, a tenant group might organize multi-cultural potluck dinners, Christmas and holiday parties or other social events for the tenants in their buildings. Some groups run hot lunch programs for seniors. Others write and distribute newsletters to let tenants know about upcoming events or plans. Several associations in the Lower Mainland have set up food distribution programs for people who are having difficulty meeting their nutritional needs.

Organized tenant groups usually hold monthly meetings to plan activities and give people a chance to get involved. You can check the bulletin board in your building to find out when your tenant group holds its meetings.

TENANT PROGRAMS AND COMMUNICATIONS

The **Student Tenant Employment Program (STEP)** is currently offered in the Lower Mainland. It was created by BC Housing and a community partner as an employment and training initiative for BC Housing youth tenants between the ages of 15 and 19. In addition, the purpose of STEP is to contribute to the development of a positive community spirit and healthy environment for all BC Housing tenants. The program supports youth by offering the tools needed to develop their skills and find a path to a financially stable future. For further information, contact BC Housing's Operations Program Co-ordinator at 604-439-4141.



The **People, Plants and Homes (PPH)** program encourages tenants to garden no matter where they live. The program provides tenants with top soil, bedding plants, kids' garden kits and various workshops throughout the year. For more information, contact BC Housing's Operations Program Co-ordinator.

Tenant associations, social committees and special event organizers can apply for money for programs and events through the **Tenant Association Grant (TAG)** program. BC Housing and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation jointly fund this program. The goal of the program is to promote healthy, active, inclusive and sustainable directly managed housing communities. BC Housing distributes TAG application materials annually in early February. For more information, contact a Community Development Officer at 604-433-1711 or 1-800-257-7756.

The **Public Housing Advisory Council** elections are held each year at an annual general meeting. For more information, contact a Community Development Officer.

The **Bursary Program** offers \$750 awards to adults and youth living in subsidized housing. The goal is to provide opportunities for bursary recipients to pursue their education and to make positive changes for themselves and their families. The application materials are distributed each year in February and can also be found at <http://www.bchousing.org/>. For more information, contact a Community Development Officer.

The **Health Services Program** is a partnership between BC Housing and the Ministry of Health's Adult Mental Health Division. Health Services staff are health care professionals from a variety of disciplines and have expertise in crisis management.

Staff link tenants to community resources as required, provide education on various health and social topics and offer support during traumatic events. For more information, please phone your regional office and ask to speak with a Health Services Co-ordinator.



The **Addiction Recovery Program** is a health and housing partnership between BC Housing and Vancouver Coastal Health. The program provides transitional supported housing to people in recovery from problematic substance use in the Lower Mainland. For more information, contact the Lower Mainland West Regional Office at 604-694-2600 or the Lower Mainland East Regional Office at 604-525-3033.

BC Housing informs tenants of special events, programs and plans through its newsletter **News for You**, now distributed in June and December. The Public Housing Advisory Council also distributes an annual newsletter, **Bridging the Gap**, which updates tenants on the Council's activities and plans.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

There are many kinds of support services in your community. You can contact your tenant group or the Public Housing Advisory Council for assistance in locating the appropriate services in your area.

YOUR RIGHTS

Tenancy Agreement

Before moving into your unit, you signed a Tenancy Agreement with BC Housing and should have a copy of this agreement. (If you have lost yours, you can call your Property Portfolio Manager to request another copy.)

You are responsible for following the rules in this agreement – for pets, guests, storage, parking, noise and moving, for example. If you find some of the rules difficult to understand, your PPM can explain them.



Residential Tenancy Act

The provincial Residential Tenancy Act explains the rights and responsibilities of tenants and landlords. The rights in this act protect you as a tenant in public housing, and you have the same responsibilities as any other tenant in B.C. Unless you are paying market rent, the rules for rent increases do not apply to you, because the Tenant Rent Contribution you pay is based on 30 per cent of your household's gross income (subject to minimum rents).

For more information on your rights and responsibilities as a tenant, you can phone the Residential Tenancy Office at 604-660-3456 or 1-800-661-4886 outside the Lower Mainland.

Human Rights

The Human Rights Code states that with respect to a tenancy, people cannot discriminate against, or harass someone, because of their race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, religion, marital status, family status, physical or mental disability, gender, sexual orientation, age or lawful source of income. Discrimination may involve harassment, which includes actions or words meant to embarrass or mistreat someone, based on the grounds described above. Some examples include repeated insults, name calling, sexual or racial remarks and touching someone who does not want to be touched. Grabbing, pushing and hitting are types of assault, and legal action, including the filing of police reports, can be undertaken immediately.

Anyone, including BC Housing staff and tenants should not harass you, and it is wrong for you to harass anyone. If possible, tell the offender to stop. It's also a good idea to write down the details of what happened (who, what, when, where). You should report any forms of harassment to your Property Portfolio Manager or your Regional or Area Manager. When we receive a harassment complaint, we will try to correct the problem as quickly as possible, to the extent that our authority allows.

