

Mainely Landlords

For landlords with tenants who have Housing Choice Vouchers from MaineHousing

August 2008



Obligation to Post No Smoking Signs Where Oxygen Hazards Exist

A recent fire resulted in a tenant's death. Unfortunately, the tenant was smoking in his apartment while oxygen was in use.

Landlords are required to post "No Smoking" signs in "high hazard" areas. Chapter 10-Section 10.1&4 of the Uniform Fire Code, which the State of Maine has adopted, authorizes the Authority Having Jurisdiction to "order the owner to post 'No Smoking' signs in conspicuous, designated locations where smoking is prohibited" and further stipulates that "Smoking or depositing any lighted or smoldering substance in a place where required 'No Smoking' signs are posted shall be prohibited."

MaineHousing considers apartments where supplemental oxygen is in use to be "high hazard" areas and landlords must post "No Smoking" signs at any unit in your property(s) where you are aware supplemental oxygen is in use.

Save the Date

Maine Affordable Housing Conference

September 29, 2008

Restrictions on Outside Grills

Maine's new Uniform Fire Code limits the location of outside grills.

"For other than one and two family dwellings, no hibachi, gas fired grill, charcoal grill, or other similar devices used for cooking, heating, or any other purpose, shall be used or kindled on any balcony or under any overhanging portions or within 10 ft (3m) of any structure." (Chapter 10.11.7)

MaineHousing Inspectors will be requiring that this standard is met. Failure to meet this standard will be considered a 24-hour fail item.

When Rent Increases Are Allowed

Before requesting a rent increase, ask yourself two questions:

Is this request within the first year of lease?

Rents cannot be increased within the first year of lease.

Did I give proper 60-day notice to the tenant?

Rent increase requests must be submitted to tenants and MaineHousing 60-days prior to the date the rent increase is to take effect.

This newsletter is provided by MaineHousing's Asset Management Department. For more information, contact the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher team at 624-5789 or 1-866-357-4853.

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Reducing Building Energy Use


Improving building energy efficiency and changing energy habits can reduce building operating costs.

There are many things you can do yourself to improve building energy use.

 Did you know that a 5 degree F higher setting on your air conditioning thermostat may save about 10% on cooling costs? Similarly, lowering your thermostat 3 to 5 degrees F during the heating season may save you up to 20% on heating costs.¹

 Replace or clean both air conditioner and furnace filters regularly for the most efficient operation. Keeping your furnace clean, lubricated, and properly adjusted also can save you money.

 Replace standard incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) and watch them pay for themselves over time. CFLs use about 75% less energy than incandescent bulbs, and last 6 to 10 times longer.²

 Cut water use by installing faucet aerators, low-flow showerheads and low-flush toilets.

There also are many things your tenants can do to reduce building energy use. We've attached ENERGY STAR's Top 10 Tips for Renters. ENERGY STAR is a joint program of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy that promotes energy efficient products and practices.

Consider an Energy Audit

Most buildings would benefit from an energy audit. A certified energy auditor uses equipment such as blower doors, which measure air leaks in the building envelope, and infrared cameras, which reveal hard to find areas of air infiltration or missing insulation, to evaluate the building. The auditor then provides a list of potential improvements and how much energy they could save. For a list of certified energy auditors, go to <http://www.mainehousing.org/Documents/Energy/MaineCertifiedEnergyAuditors.pdf>

¹ <http://www.fypower.org/res/changing-habits.html>

² http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=cfls.pr_cfls

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ENERGY STAR is a joint program of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy helping us all save money and protect the environment through energy efficient products and practices.

Top 10 Tips for Renters!

Even if you rent an apartment, townhouse, or a home, you can make a big difference, too! These tips will show you how to be more energy efficient and save energy, money, and reduce the risks of global warming. If there are things you can't change on your own, share these tips and encourage your landlord to help you make a change for the better.

1. Lighting is one of the easiest places to start saving energy. Replacing your five most frequently used light fixtures or the bulbs in them with ENERGY STAR qualified lights can save more than \$65 a year in energy costs. ENERGY STAR qualified compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) provide high-quality light output, use 75% less energy, and last 6–10 times longer than standard incandescent light bulbs, saving money on energy bills and replacement costs.
 - Remember to always turn off your lights when leaving a room. Turning off just one 60-watt incandescent bulb that would otherwise burn eight hours a day can save about \$15 per year!
2. Considering purchasing a room air conditioner? Consider an ENERGY STAR qualified model. They use at least 10 percent less energy than standard models.
 - In the winter, be sure to insulate room air conditioners from the outside with a tight-fitting a/c unit cover, available at your local home improvement center or hardware store. This keeps heated air from escaping outside. Alternately, you can remove the window unit in the winter months to prevent energy losses.
 - Be sure the window unit fits tightly in the window so outdoor air is not getting in.
3. If possible, install a programmable thermostat to automatically adjust your home's temperature settings when you're away or sleeping.
 - When used properly, a programmable thermostat with its four temperature settings can save up to \$150 a year in energy costs. Proper use means setting the thermostat at energy-saving temperatures without overriding that setting. You should also set the "hold" button at a constant energy-saving temperature when you're away or on vacation.
4. Consumer electronics play an increasingly larger role in your home's energy consumption, accounting for 15 percent of household electricity use. Many consumer electronics products use energy even when switched off. Electronics equipment that has earned the ENERGY STAR helps save energy when off, while maintaining features like clock displays, channel settings, and remote-control functions.
 - Unplug any battery chargers or power adapters when not in use (like your cell phone charger!).
 - Use a power strip as a central "turn off" point when you are done using equipment.
 - Even when turned off, electronic and IT equipment often use a small amount of electricity. For home office equipment, this stand-by or "phantom" power load can range from a few watts to as much as 20 or even 40 watts for each piece of equipment. Using a power strip for your computer and all peripheral equipment allows you to completely disconnect the power supply from the power source, eliminating standby power consumption.

Top 10 Tips for Renters! (continued)

5. A ten minute shower can use less water than a full bath.
 - With a new 2.5 gallon-per-minute (low-flow) shower head, a 10-minute shower will use about 25 gallons of water, saving you five gallons of water over a typical bath. A new showerhead also will save energy — up to \$145 each year on electricity — beating out both the bath and an old-fashioned showerhead.
 - To avoid moisture problems, control humidity in your bathroom by running your ventilating fan during and 15 minutes after showers and baths.
6. Make sure all air registers are clear of furniture so that air can circulate freely. If your home has radiators, place heat-resistant reflectors between radiators and walls. In the winter, this will help heat the room instead of the wall.
7. During cold weather, take advantage of the sun's warmth by keeping drapes open during daylight hours. To keep out the heat of the summer sun, close window shades and drapes in warm weather.
8. Save water by scraping dishes instead of rinsing them before loading in the dishwasher. Run your dishwasher with a full load and use the air-dry option if available.
 - Rinsing dirty dishes before loading your dishwasher uses a lot of water and energy. Most dishwashers today can thoroughly clean dishes that have had food scraped, rather than rinsed, off — the wash cycle and detergent take care of the rest. To make the most efficient use of your dishwasher's energy and water consumption, run the dishwasher only when enough dirty dishes have accumulated for a full load.
9. Wash your laundry with cold water whenever possible. To save water, try to wash full loads or, if you must wash a partial load, reduce the level of water appropriately.
 - Hot water heating accounts for about 90 percent of the energy your machine uses to wash clothes — only 10 percent goes to electricity used by the washer motor. Depending on the clothes and local water quality (hardness), many homeowners can effectively do laundry exclusively with cold water, using cold water laundry detergents. Switching to cold water can save the average household more than \$40 annually (with an electric water heater) and more than \$30 annually (with a gas water heater).
 - Washing full loads can save you more than 3,400 gallons of water each year.
10. Don't over dry your clothes. If your dryer has a moisture sensor that will automatically turn the machine off when clothes are done, use it to avoid over drying. Remember to clean the lint trap before every load. Dry full loads, or reduce drying time for partial loads. Learn more.
 - It's easy to over dry your clothes, if one setting is used for various fabric types. Try to dry loads made up of similar fabrics, so the entire load dries just as the cycle ends. Many dryers come with energy-saving moisture or humidity sensors that shut off the heat when the clothes are dry. If you don't have this feature, try to match the cycle length to the size and weight of the load. A dryer operating an extra 15 minutes per load can cost you up to \$34, every year.
 - The lint trap is an important energy saver. Dryers work by moving heated air through wet clothes, evaporating and then venting water vapor outside. If the dryer cannot provide enough heat, or move air sufficiently through the clothes, they will take longer to dry, and may not dry at all. One of the easiest things you can do to increase drying efficiency is to clean the lint trap before each and every load. This step also can save you up to \$34 each year.