

Apartment Building Security

Overview

Building codes and safety regulations are in place in most jurisdictions in Canada. Through various legislative acts, all levels of government play a role in Building Safety and Security.

The legislative acts ensure that rental dwelling units are maintained in compliance with minimum health and safety regulations.

Apartment buildings primarily fall under provincial/territorial Residential Tenancies Acts.

Under the residential acts the landlord normally has three obligations:

- To provide and maintain the rental unit and apartment complex in a good state of repair.
- To provide and maintain the rental unit and apartment complex fit for habitation.
- To ensure that the building meets health, safety and security standards. These are primarily dealt with by municipal property standards and standards set by the local health authority.

Tenant Safety and Security

This document addresses a safety and security issue that could affect all tenants.

Physical Assaults

It has been reported that the most common criminal acts that lead to

lawsuits against landlords in apartment communities are assault and battery, followed by sexual assaults. Landlords have a legal responsibility to protect their tenants from assailants, thieves and the criminal acts of employees, and fellow tenants while on their premises.

Apartment building owners along with their insurers are facing an increasing number of liability suits in this regard. Landlords are more likely to be held liable when a crime occurs on their property, especially if a similar assault or other crime has occurred in the past.

Building codes, ordinances, statutes, and most frequently, court decisions outline a landlord's legal duties.

To reduce the risk the landlord must take preventive measures.

By following a proactive management plan, you can protect yourself and your business.

- Assess the crime situation in and around the apartment complex and design a security system that provides reasonable protection for the tenants.
- Meet or exceed all local and provincial security laws that apply to rental property i.e. deadbolt locks, excellent lighting & window locks.
- Maintain and conduct regular inspections to locate and fix any security problems.
- Educate tenants about crime problems in the neighborhood and describe the security measures provided at the building and their limitations.

- Put in place a system to deal with tenants complaints about dangerous situations or suspicious activities. Failing to respond to a tenant complaint may result in a higher degree of legal liability should a tenant be injured by a criminal act after a relevant complaint is made.
- Background checks should be conducted on staff, e.g., superintendents (including their family members). Special attention should be paid to those who may have access to master keys.
- Maintain written records of security checks, etc.
- Supply a safety tip sheet for tenants or post it in a public place in the building (see Apartment Building Safety and Security Tips for Tenants)

Suggestions to improve the safety and security of tenants Include:

1. The entry door lock should be re-keyed or deadbolt locks replaced when tenants move out.
2. The exterior doors should fit their frames tightly, with no more than 1/8-inch space between the door and frame.
3. Bars that can be opened from the inside should protect all windows accessible from ground level.
4. Windows and sliding doors should have anti-lift devices to prevent them from being lifted out.
5. The hallways in and around your building should be well lit, and burned out bulbs replaced promptly.
6. Building mirrors should be placed strategically in the hallways to allow tenants to see around corners.
7. The building should have a policy of never buzzing a stranger into your apartment building, no matter how

good an excuse they have.

8. You should install a wide-angle 160-degree peep hole in apartment doors, mounted no higher than 58 inches.
9. You should hold regular tenant safety meetings, and post safety tips in common areas such as the front entrance or laundry room.

References

Provincial Tenancies Acts - For access simply go the specific provincial web site.

Example: Ontario is gov.on.ca

For other provinces, simply replace with the specific province abbreviation.

Additional Information:

Hardfact Apartment Safety – Falls from Windows and balconies (A-5767)

Apartment Building Safety and Security Tips (A-5768)

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