

# Renter's Manual



**STIMENS APARTMENTS**  
Residential Rentals and Commercial Properties

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## Stimens Apartments

Office hours:  
Monday – Friday  
9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.  
After-hours showings are available by appointment

Dear Tenants,

Thank you for choosing to rent from Stimens Apartments. We are pleased to provide you with this copy of our Renter's Manual. It is intended to be helpful and to provide information and guidance about the various services and policies that we have. We hope that you will find it useful.

The rules contained herein are intended to maintain everyone's safety as well as the condition of the property. We ask that you take the time to read through this Renter's Manual. It will inform you about some things you may not have known and is a supplement to the information in your lease. Keep this guide in a handy place where you can refer to it whenever you need. We welcome you to your new home and hope you will enjoy living here!

Kurt Stimens, owner  
Stimens Apartments



## Policies

### Emergency Contact Information

Our maintenance staff is available from Monday through Friday between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. We realize that often things happen outside of those hours, and we do have some numbers that you can use to reach us after-hours if you have a problem that truly requires immediate assistance:

After-Hours Maintenance Phone -----	419-295-9593
Stacy Pickering (Office Manager) -----	419-545-4647
Mike Lomax (Maintenance Supervisor) -----	419-709-7361
Erick Medek (Maintenance) -----	419-295-2718
Gabrielle Cooney (Commercial Property Leasing) -----	937-477-6042
Kurt Stimens (Owner – for <u>absolute</u> emergencies only) --	419-564-1662

Only use this service for emergencies! Please do not use these numbers to report ordinary maintenance issues like your garbage disposal quit or your bathroom sink is clogged – for those types of issues just call our office number at 419-774-9292 and leave a message. We are also not available after hours for problems like “someone parked in my spot” or “my neighbor is playing loud music.” We expect you to help yourself if possible – go knock on your neighbor’s door and ask them to please turn down their music or move their car. If they are uncooperative, then call the police. If it is an ongoing problem, please do call our office and let us know about it, and we will address the problem during our normal business hours.

In reality, there are only a few things that are “emergencies” in our eyes. Running or pouring water is one of them. A potentially injured or deceased person is another one. Fire, of course, is another one. But for fires, you are better off calling 911 right away – they have the training and equipment for such an emergency; we do not. If you have a problem after hours, please use your discretion to decide whether the issue is a true emergency and needs immediate action or if it is something that can wait to be attended to until the next business day.

## **General Rules and Guidelines**

- 1.** No unlawful use shall be made of any apartments/dwellings.
- 2.** Rent is expected to be paid on time. Penalties for paying late are enforced.
- 3.** Tenants should be considerate of their neighbors and must not interfere with the rights of their neighbors to quiet and safe enjoyment of their dwelling.
- 4.** Each tenant shall ensure that existing smoke alarms shall not be removed or tampered with, and shall be maintained with functional batteries.
- 5.** No tenant shall permit an infestation of pests, insects, vermin or rodents to exist at any time in their residence and shall notify landlord promptly upon noticing any infestation.
- 6.** Water shall not be left running unless in actual use. Tenants shall notify landlord immediately if there is a leaking faucet or other type of running water that tenant cannot shut off completely.
- 7.** Tenants shall not overload existing electrical circuits in their units.
- 8.** No littering on the property - e.g. cigarette butts, candy wrappers, etc.
- 9.** Tenants shall be responsible for the behavior of your guests.
- 10.** Tenants are strongly recommended to maintain a renter's liability insurance policy.
- 11.** Tenants will be held financially responsible for any damage caused to our property by tenants or their guests.
- 12.** Tenants should keep their rental in a clean, sanitary, uncluttered and safe condition. Please take pride in your home!
- 13.** Reasonable accommodations will gladly be made for tenants with documented disabilities, including documented service animals.

## Lock-Outs

When new renters move in, we usually give them a second key for their house or apartment and advise them to hide it somewhere that they can retrieve it in case they ever accidentally lock themselves out of their home. That way if you ever return home at 1:00 A.M. and cannot find your key, you still have a way to get into your home. We really do not want our tenants to call us in the middle of the night asking us to come unlock their door – we generally will not come out at that hour to do that for you, and will probably tell you to go find a friend or relative’s place to sleep for the night and to call our office in the morning.

If you are ever locked out of your residence during our normal business hours, and you still have your car keys or have a friend or neighbor who can give you a ride, you can come to our office and we will cut another copy of your key for you. If you do not have transportation, please call our office and we will be glad to send someone out to unlock the door for you (once or twice). We will usually ask to see your I.D. if we don’t know you, just to protect your property.

If you do find yourself locked out after our office is closed and you need us to let you in to your rental and it is not in the middle of the night, do call the emergency numbers and one of our maintenance or office staff may be able to come let you in. However, be prepared to pay around \$20 for this service, as our employees do have lives outside of their jobs and deserve to be compensated for this inconvenience. This service is still a good deal for you – if you don’t think so, just call one of the local lock shops and see how much they will charge you! Your best bet is to make sure you have a spare key that you leave in a safe place or with a trusted friend or relative.

## Changing Door Locks

After a tenant moves away, we change the door locks to their previous rental, for security reasons. When a new tenant moves in then you should be the only one who has a key to your rental, other than our office.

Sometimes tenants call us to request that their locks be changed. Reasons commonly given are that they lost their keys, or a “friend” got a copy of their keys, or their boyfriend or girlfriend left in a huff and the tenant is afraid they may return and help themselves to their apartment and belongings. Whatever the reason, it is the tenant’s responsibility to get their locks rekeyed or replaced.

If you decide that you do need your lock changed, the most affordable way to get this done is to do it yourself by removing your lockset and taking it to Advanced Key and Lock Shop at 51 Lexington Ave. in

Mansfield - (419)524-2702. Request that the lock be set to a new key for you, and ask that they preserve the lock's Stimens "Master Key" setting. The key shop usually charges about \$12 per lock to rekey them.

You may also call our office and request that one of our maintenance staff changes your locks for you. You WILL be billed for this service, typically \$25 to \$40 per lock, and we cannot guarantee that we can get this done on the same day that you request it, especially if you call on a weekend.

## **Charges for Maintenance**

Most maintenance on apartments, houses, and commercial suites is provided by us at our expense. Such repairs are for appliances that break down or things that just get old or fail to work, like light switches, air conditioners, furnaces, faucets, etc., etc.

Should any maintenance or repairs be needed due to the fault of the tenant or their guests, charges will be billed to the tenant. For example, if we have to install a new garbage disposal because the tenant broke theirs, or we have to auger your toilet and find a kid's toy stuck in there, or your entry door gets kicked in and the door jamb needs to be replaced, charges to the tenant will apply. If the repair needed is your fault or your responsibility, please accept this liability and make it right from us. Unpaid bills will remain on your account until they have been paid in full.

Did you know that tenants are responsible for their windows and doors while they have a lease for the property? If damage occurs to a door, or a window is broken, even by an unknown entity, the tenant is liable for the damage and will be held financially responsible.

## **Clogged Drains or Toilets**

When you move in, all of your drains should be draining and all of your toilets should be flushing properly. We expect you to take responsibility for keeping your drains working properly. We recommend that you buy yourself a decent drain plunger – the double-headed ones are best. If your toilet or sink gets clogged, please try to take care of this problem yourself before you call to request a maintenance person to come out. If you are not able to clear the clog, then call our office and we will send someone out to take care of it.

Sometimes the cause of a plumbing problem is natural, like perhaps tree roots growing in your main sewer line or an accumulation of hair in your tub or vanity drain. If the cause is natural, then we will perform the repair at no cost to you. However, if we find that the cause is your fault, such as excessive toilet paper or a toy stuck in the trap of the toilet, or a toothbrush stuck in the vanity's trap, or excessive grease poured down your kitchen drain, you can expect to receive a bill from us for that service call.

## Late Payment of Rent

It should have been made very clear to you when you signed your lease that rent is due on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of every month in advance – this means that, for example, rent for the month of May is due on May 1<sup>st</sup>. We give you a five-day grace period in which to pay your rent without a late fee, but the rent is considered late after the 1<sup>st</sup> – please keep that in mind! If you pay your rent after the 5<sup>th</sup>, there is a fifty dollar (\$50) late fee, (effective October 1, 2019 for all tenants not still under a current lease with the old late fee schedule).

We don't like to have to collect late fees – we would rather that you just pay your rent on time each month and you can use that late fee money to buy yourself something rather than giving it to us. However, we enforce the late fee charges because we have to pay our bills on time, and if we didn't charge a late fee then many renters would pay rent late and think they could pay whenever they felt like it. If you choose to make us wait for our rent, be prepared to pay for that privilege. Please also understand that we are not obligated to accept your rent if it is late - if we have already had several complaints about you as a tenant and you try to pay your rent after the 1st, we may choose to refuse it.

Communication is a good thing, especially if you know you are going to be more than five days late. If you know that you will not be able to pay your rent until, for example, the 7<sup>th</sup> of the month, you need to call our office and let us know, or risk having an eviction filed against you.

Every month we hand out “Notice to Pay Rent or Move” forms, also known as a “3-day notice,” anywhere from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> of the month to those tenants who have not yet paid rent. If you get one of these forms, this does not mean that you have to move right then! Instead, consider it a formal notice that you need to contact our office immediately and make arrangements to pay your rent, if you have not already contacted us. If you don't usually pay late, we will most likely allow you to pay late if you contact us to make arrangements, but understand that you will still owe your late fee. Tenants who are habitually late may get their “3-day notices” on the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> of the month – if this happens to you, it is because we are getting fed up with your late payments and you need to get with the program and start paying on time!

If you call us to make an arrangement to pay your rent late, don't make a promise that you know you can't keep. If you say that you will pay on the 12<sup>th</sup>, for instance, make darn sure that you honor your promise – otherwise we may start an eviction process on the 13<sup>th</sup>!

There are several area organizations and charities that sometimes help tenants with their rent and/or utilities. These organizations usually have most of their funding at the beginning of the month, so if you know you will need help with your rent, don't wait until the middle of the month to look for help, as there may be little help available at that point. If you think you will need help with your rent, call our office and get a “3-day

notice” on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of the month, and then call 2-1-1 – this is the number for the local helpline and their staff can tell you which agencies you should be able to get help from. Some renters will qualify for help from groups such as Catholic Charities or the Salvation Army, and some may qualify for help from the Veterans or other specialized groups, depending on your situation.

It is very important that whatever organization you are able to get to help you with your rent communicates their intent of assistance to our office, so we will know that funds are coming and will not start an expensive and unnecessary eviction proceeding against you. Please let us know if you will be getting help!

## **Eviction Process**

We do not like to evict anyone. If we have to evict someone, they lose and we lose – we BOTH lose! We try very hard to work with persons who have violated their lease and are at risk for eviction, especially if it is someone with a temporary financial problem who is having trouble coming up with the rent. However, if the tenant becomes a repeat offender, either for constantly being late with the rent or for continuously breaking some other term of your lease, we will eventually reach the point where we feel we have no choice but to evict you. The following is a description of how the eviction process works:

Before we evict you, we first have to give you a notice to let you know that we intend to take action against you. This notice will be served to you at your premises – we will either hand it to you in person or tape it to your door. If the reason for possible eviction is non-payment of rent only, the notice we give you will say “Notice to Pay Rent or Move,” and you will have THREE (3) days from the date of the Notice to either contact us and pay or make payment arrangements or we may proceed to the next formal step of the eviction process. If there are other lease violations instead of, or in addition to, the non-payment of rent that have led us to the point where we decide to evict you, then you may receive a “Notice to Leave the Premises,” which will state on the form the date by which we wish for you to vacate the premises – often we will give you until the end of the current month to vacate, but if the lease violation is severe, then we may ask that you leave sooner. If you get a “Notice to Pay Rent or Move,” you can usually stop the eviction process by simply contacting our office and paying the rent within the three day period – if you do this, we will mark our copy of the notice as “paid” and place it in your file, end of story. If, however, you get a “Notice to Leave the Premises,” then you will most likely end up having to move, unless you are able to immediately solve the lease violation(s) AND get permission from the owner to halt any eviction proceedings.

If you fail to contact us and either pay your rent or resolve any other lease violation, then we have the option to file an eviction, legally referred to as a “Forcible Entry,” with the court. This costs us at least \$100 for the filing fee, (\$200 in Galion), and requires us to type up and prepare all of the necessary documentation,

secure an attorney to sign the Complaint, and then go to the Court of jurisdiction to file it. The Court will then set a date for the eviction hearing; usually about two weeks after the date the eviction complaint was filed. If the only reason for your eviction is non-payment of rent, then usually if you can come up with the rent and eviction fee and pay it to us, we will cancel the eviction hearing. The Court records will still show that you had an eviction filed against you, but the record will also show that the eviction was dismissed. This is better for your credit than an eviction that makes it to court and gets heard and granted! Also, this information is a matter of public record and anyone who googles your name will see this bad news.

If your late rent payment or other lease violation is not satisfied prior to your court date, then Kurt or one of our staff, accompanied by an attorney, will attend the Court hearing. You are encouraged to show up as well – if you choose not to show up, the court will automatically rule against you and grant the eviction. If you feel you have any legitimate reason for your lease violation that you would like the judge to hear, then you should definitely show up for court. In Mansfield, eviction court starts at 8:00 a.m. sharp – if your name is called and you are not there, the eviction will be granted. If you do show up for the hearing, when the judge/magistrate calls your name and ours, we must both go to the front of the courtroom. The magistrate will have us both raise our right hands and promise to tell the truth. The attorney will then present the case, the magistrate will ask a few questions, both of us will have the opportunity to give our sides of the story, and the magistrate will give his decision right then and there. Make no mistake, if you did not pay your rent, the law does not care why you didn't pay it. Excuses like "I got laid off" or "my car broke down" or "my relative out of town died" or "I was in the hospital" will not do you any good. If you did not pay your rent, the Court will decide against you and the eviction will be granted. If your eviction is for another type of lease violation, then if we can show that you did indeed violate that term of your lease, the eviction will most likely be granted as well.

Once the eviction is granted, you will need to move out. If you did not show up for court, then after court we will check your rental to see if you have already moved out. If you are no longer there, then we will go ahead and change the locksets on your rental, and that will be the end of the eviction process. The costs of the entire process, (eviction fees, attorney fees, unpaid rent and fees, and any damages to your rental), will be billed against your security deposit, and a copy of the bill will be mailed to you.

If you have NOT moved out after the eviction has been granted, then we will have to file a court order called a Writ of Restitution to have you and your belongings physically removed from the premises. There is an additional fee required by the court for us to file a Writ – Mansfield charges \$35. We normally file the Writ the same day that the eviction is granted, after we have verified that you are indeed still occupying the premises and have no means or intention to vacate or pay your past-due rent. Once the Writ has been filed,

the Court Bailiff will schedule a day for the actual move out – this is usually around three business days after the day the Writ was filed. Usually the same day that the Writ has been filed, but sometimes the next day, the bailiff will come to your property and post a large, brightly-colored notice on your door that states the day and time for your “set-out.” Set-outs are usually scheduled on a business day between 8:00 and 11:00 a.m. You have between the time that you get that notice on the door and the time posted as the “set-out” to voluntarily remove yourself and your belongings from our rental property or even miraculously pay all of your rent and fees and have the entire process stopped.

What happens if you are still in the property at the time that the bailiff shows up for the “set-out”? Well, one of our staff members will be present to meet the bailiff at the property. If you are at the property when the bailiff and us arrive, and you are actively in the process of removing your belongings, we may, at our discretion, allow you a few more hours to complete this process, but will give you a specific time during that same day that we intend to return and change the locks whether you are done or not. If, when we get there, we do not see that you are in the process of moving, the bailiff will knock loudly and announce his presence, and if you do not answer the door, then our staff member will use our copy of the key to your rental to open the door. If we are able to open the door and we find that the property is vacant, then one of our maintenance staff will go ahead and change the lock. If we open the door and you are still in there and do not appear to be making any attempt to remove your belongings, the bailiff will order you to leave the premises and we will change the lock and call in a crew of our employees to start removing your belonging. If we are not able to open the door because you have changed or blocked the lock, we will have one of our maintenance persons force open the lock, and if you are in there you will have to leave, and whether you are in there or not we will put a new lock on. The bailiff will not leave the property until we have gained access to it and determined if you are there or not.

If we do end up having to remove you and your property, remember that legally your right to be in the property is over, and we have the right to physically remove your possessions from the property. Once the Writ is served, if you set foot on the property again you could be charged with trespassing, so your best option to avoid further trouble is to cooperate with the instructions of the bailiff. We will move all of your possessions to the yard or by the street or sidewalk. We usually place your smaller possessions into garbage bags before we set them outside, and your larger items and furniture will be placed in a pile. The tenant has the rest of the day to remove their belongings from the yard. We do not “guard” your possessions – once they are set outside we are not responsible for what happens to them; they will be exposed to the “vultures and thieves” of our society, who may swoop in and take whatever they can steal. This is an unfortunate situation,

but we have done this process many times and have seen how our less honorable citizens have run off with whatever they want. The following day our staff will remove and dispose of any items that are still outside.

When a writ is served, charges for our staff's time and trouble, as well as any necessary trips to the landfill, will be assessed against your security deposit. Also, it sure looks bad on your credit and to future landlords to have not only an eviction granted against you but a Writ of Restitution as well! It shows the world that not only were you evicted but you were physically moved out also, so you were both financially and personally irresponsible – not a reputation most persons wish to have!

And remember, if we evict you, it is not a personal matter on our part. If we have to file an eviction against you, it means that you have somehow failed to meet your obligation to us and we are forced to use the eviction process to get our property back from you. The worst thing you can do is to make matters worse by sabotaging or causing damage or destruction to any of our property – if this happens, you WILL be turned in to law enforcement and charged with malicious destruction of property and any other criminal charges that apply. So in addition to ruining your credit you would also have the law after you, which would, as Kurt likes to say, bring you some very bad Karma!

We do not like to end our rental relationship with anyone on a bad note, so please do what you can to avoid this entire process! Comply with the terms of your lease and pay your rent when it is due and you will not have to worry about being evicted. If you are ever informed by our office that you are in violation of your lease for any reason, please work with our office to promptly correct the violation – this makes life easier for everyone involved!

## **Excessive Noise**

If you are living in a single-family house, noise from your household or caused by your neighbors is probably not going to be a problem. However, if you live in a duplex, townhouse, or apartment, there are probably times that noise will be a problem for either you or your neighbors.

Please realize that when you live in a multi-family dwelling, both you and your neighbors need to be considerate and respect the right of each other to enjoy their rental. This means that you and your family and guests need to keep any noise to a minimum, and you have the right to expect the same consideration from your neighbors. This is especially important between the hours of 9:00 p.m. and 9:00 a.m. – during those hours you need to turn down the volume of your music and television – remember that you have people right next door to you who may be sleeping! Remind your guests that while they are welcome to visit you during those hours, they need to try to keep their voices down as well.

During the day, everyone living in a multi-family rental needs to realize that at times there will be some noise from their neighbors, just because of the nature of living in such close proximity to each other. Try to be understanding if you occasionally hear a neighbor's pan drop on the floor or a child squeal about something. Be forgiving so that you can also be forgiven when you accidentally make a noise someday!

We always recommend that a new renter try to introduce themselves to their other immediate neighbors in a friendly and engaging manner. Be complimentary and let them know that you would be helpful to them if needed, (to a point). In other words, create a good feeling. If people like you they will be much more forgiving if, for instance, one of your visitors makes a little more noise than they should or your baby cries too much one night. If someone likes you, they tend to be more understanding and tolerant.

If you ever plan to have a small party or card game, etc., it might be a good idea to forewarn your neighbors so they are mentally prepared for a little extra noise. If you ever want to have a bigger party, have it somewhere else! An apartment is NOT a good place to have a noisy party with lots of people! Have the party at a friend's house or rent a hall. Don't do it in your apartment where you are going to make your neighbors angry and possibly have the police called on you. Then your landlord will not be happy with you, either! Repeated complaints about noise from your rental could result in an eviction – please don't let it get to that point – be considerate and cooperative!

## **Guests and Co-Inhabitants**

Only the persons listed on your rental agreement have the right to live in your rental. If you want to add another occupant to your residence, you will need to bring that person in to our office, along with their I.D, and have them fill out an application and pass the background check. They cannot be added to your lease without your consent.

Be careful whom you allow to “stay” at your rental. There is a difference between someone who visits for a week and someone who stays for a month. If your guest stays for more than a week AND starts receiving their mail at your address, then they have established rights of residency, and you may have to legally evict them if you later decide you want them to leave and they are not willing to go. This has happened on numerous occasions, especially when boyfriends or girlfriends find that they are no longer welcome.

If we find that you have unauthorized persons occupying your rental, that is a violation of your lease and we may issue you a “Notice to Move” due to the unauthorized occupants. This could lead to an eviction if you don't contact our office and take care of this problem by either having the unauthorized persons leave, or following the proper procedure to add them to your lease.

## Damages by Occupants and Guests

We want you and your family and guests to feel at home in your rental – you are welcome within reason to entertain, play, have fun, and generally enjoy life. We also want you and your guests to behave and not tear up anything in the rental or on the grounds. Throwing rocks, breaking windows or tree branches, marking up the building, or trampling on flowers is NOT acceptable. We expect tenants to convey this message to every occupant and guest at their property. Tenants will be held responsible for the actions of their occupants and guests. You will be contacted if we receive complaints from your neighbors about the actions of anyone at your rental, and you will be billed for damages caused by any occupant or guest. Continuous noise complaints or damages caused by any occupant or guest of your rental are considered violations of your lease and could lead to your being asked to move or being evicted.

## Dumpsters

To our renters who live in apartments – the dumpsters are there for your use – not your friends or relatives! Anyone caught dumping in the containers who is not a tenant will be reported to the authorities, and will most likely be charged criminally and fined. The fine for illegal dumping can be very steep – the City of Mansfield’s fine is \$250. Kurt has personally caught and reported illegal dumpers and has watched as the Mansfield Police write up the \$250 ticket for them. We do not hesitate or mind doing this, as illegal dumping does cause us unwanted inconvenience and expense. Sometimes people overload the dumpsters and then we have excessive trash falling out and scattering around. Kurt does not like to clean up these messes or have to pay someone to do it for him. Please warn your friends and relatives that we have a “no tolerance” policy for unauthorized use of our dumpsters!

If you set a junk couch or old mattress or furniture out by the dumpster, the garbage men won’t take it. So then we have to either set it in the dumpster, if possible, or load it up and haul it away. This costs us time and money to pay someone to do this for us. Charges may be billed to you by us. If you have questions about disposing such items, please call us! Also, if you need to throw cardboard boxes away, flatten them out before putting them in the dumpster, so they won’t use up all of the room in the dumpster. Or better yet, flatten them out and bring them to our green recycle dumpster located in front of our office building. You may use this dumpster for all of your recyclables – paper, plastic #1 and #2, aluminum and steel cans, cardboard, newspapers, and glass bottles.

## Littering

We try to keep the grounds and parking lots of our rental properties cleaned up of litter, but it is a never-ending job. Some tenants and their guests don't seem to care about such things, and throw their McDonald's bags, beer & soda cans, cigarettes, etc. down right in their own parking lots or yards. Come on! Have some pride! The dumpster or trash can is not that far away! Walk over to it and throw your trash away! Please and thank you!

If you and your kids are bored, you can even help out by picking up the litter and throwing it away. Pride – it is a rare thing, but it is a good thing!

## Renter's Insurance

All renters are advised to get themselves a "Renter's Insurance Policy." This will protect you in a couple of ways: 1) It will replace all of your personal items and furniture in case they are lost due to being stolen or destroyed in a fire, tornado, or earthquake. 2) It will protect you in case you are ever found liable for something like having caused a fire or running your car into the building or overflowing your bathtub and ruining your neighbor's apartment, etc. If you cause some catastrophe or casualty, our insurance will usually cover the costs minus our deductible, which in most cases is \$2500. But then our insurance company and Kurt will come after you for the full cost of the loss, because you were responsible for causing the problem. Your policy will cover this expense for you, minus the cost of your deductible.

We carry "casualty" insurance, which covers us for such things as damage caused by a tornado, fire, etc. But this policy only covers damage to the building. It does not cover any of our renter's possessions. Protecting personal possessions is a tenant's responsibility. Our insurance WOULD cover your possessions IF the cause of the loss was determined to be our responsibility. For instance, if a fire destroyed your rental because one of our maintenance personnel were using a torch to solder some water lines and they accidentally caught the place on fire, your belongings would in that case be covered by our insurance.

But in most instances that there is a loss of property, it is because of random bad luck or natural disaster or another tenant or person. Who is to be blamed for a tornado or for a strike of lightning that starts a fire? Who is responsible if an unknown thief breaks in and steals all of your valuables? If you do not have renter's insurance and you suffer a loss due to such an instance, your valuables will not be covered and you will have to bear the burden of trying to replace your things.

Basic renter's policies can be purchased for about \$150 per year, and often less if you purchase them from the same company from where you get your car insurance. Shop around, because the quotes will vary depending on the company and on the amount of coverage and deductible that you choose for yourself.

## Utilities

When you sign your lease, you should be informed of which utilities you are responsible for, if any, and which ones we pay for. These should be listed on the first page of your lease - you should have initialed an area next to each listed utility that you are responsible for paying, to show that you understand that you are responsible for promptly transferring that utility service into your name and paying those utility bills. This wording, or something very similar, is on your lease: "RESIDENT agrees to pay for all utilities specified, and to put utilities into RESIDENT's name within 2 business days of signing lease. RESIDENTS who fail to transfer utilities into their name promptly will be billed for any utility charges incurred by OWNER, and risk having their utility service disconnected, and possible eviction." Be advised that we do follow this policy, so if you didn't put your utilities into your name immediately after you moved in, expect that we are accumulating all of the bills we have to pay on your behalf and will be sending you a bill for these. If after receiving a bill from us you still have not transferred the utility service into your name, be aware that we may contact the applicable utility company or companies and have your service terminated – please don't let that happen to you! Any utility bills that you do not reimburse us for will remain on your account until they have been paid in full. If you have a large balance, be aware that we may exercise the option to apply the next payment we get from you towards your outstanding utility balance rather than to your rent. If you have any questions about this procedure, please do call our office to discuss your situation. There are local agencies that may be able to help you pay your utility bills as well as your rent, so don't hesitate to let us know if you are having difficulty paying your bills and we may be able to offer you some helpful suggestions.

On another note, if you are paying your own utilities and receive a bill that appears to be unusually high, first look closely at the bill to see if it says "Estimated Bill" rather than "Actual Reading" – if so, then go find your electric meter and take an actual reading yourself and compare it with the reading that they estimated. If the estimate is much higher than the reading that you take, then call the utility company and give them the numbers you got from the meter and ask them to please revise your bill. If the bill DOES say "Actual Reading" and the previous month's bill was also an "Actual Reading," then go through your rental and try to figure out what may be causing the high usage. A high electric bill could be caused by constantly running something like a fan or electric heater, but could also be caused by a refrigerator or hot water heater that is malfunctioning. A high gas bill could be from a furnace that constantly runs, either from having it set too high

or from a malfunctioning thermostat. A high water bill could be from either a toilet that runs constantly or a leaky faucet. If you cannot figure out the reason for what you think is an unusually high utility bill, please do call our office and request that we send someone out to check to see what the problem may be.

There are a few different reasons that the utility company will send out an “Estimated Bill” – sometimes it is due to their being unable to read your meter due to bad weather or a staffing shortage, but sometimes it is due to something on your end, such as excessive debris or weeds around your meter or an aggressive dog that will not let their meter-reader approach the meter. Check your bill to see if the “Estimated Bill” gives a reason for the estimate, and if it is something that is your fault, please take care of the issue as soon as possible. If there is no particular reason given for the “Estimated Bill” and the charges are reasonable, there is no need for you to do anything – the next month’s bill will most likely be an “Actual Bill” and any discrepancies should get balanced out and squared up.

## **All Utilities Paid**

For some of our apartments we provide all utilities for our renters. Many renters wish to have the utilities included with their rent because either they are unable to establish utility service in their own name, or they like the convenience of paying one bill for the same amount each month. This does not mean that you can excessively use or waste the electric, gas, or water that we are providing for you! We want you to be comfortable. We do not want to see your air conditioner set at 62°F and your window open, or your heat set at 90°F. Please be reasonable with your utility usage, and try to use the same amount as you would use if you were actually paying for the utilities yourself.

When we rent an apartment as “all utilities paid,” a fair amount of utility usage is included in your monthly rent. When you signed your lease, you should also have signed an addendum about the utility usage that identified how much your utility allowance is. This addendum explains that if your utility charges go above the utility allowance amount, you will be charged for any excess. If your average utility use each month continues to be more than the utility allowance established when you moved in, and we have difficulty collecting excessive utility fees from you, we will have to revise your lease by either requiring you to put the utilities into your own name, or raising your rent to a level that will compensate us for your utility usage.

## **Excessive Water Bills**

There have been times when we have had occasion to be in someone's apartment or rental and noticed that one of their faucets is dripping or their toilet tank is running. When we asked the tenant how long this has been happening, they have sometimes said "two weeks," or even "a month."

Oh no! That will create a heck of a water bill. Expect to be charged for the wasted water! You have a duty to notify us right away when you have such a problem. Not at 2:00 A.M., but the following morning would be nice.

The City of Mansfield just raised their rates again in January of 2017, and Galion and Shelby are already sky-high with their water prices. A toilet that runs continuously can add \$500 to a water bill in one month's time, so it is important to get such problems fixed. Please report water issues promptly!

## **Co-Signers**

Sometimes we have applicants that we don't feel comfortable renting to, either because of their income level or length of employment or other circumstances. We may offer the option of having a co-signer on their lease in order to rent to them.

A co-signer must pass our income and background checks in order to be a valid co-signer. An accepted co-signer must realize that if the party they are signing for doesn't pay the rent or otherwise screws up, the co-signer will be held financially responsible.

## **Steamcleaning**

If you have been in your apartment or house for a while you may notice that your carpets are getting dirty and need to be steam-cleaned. We do not provide this service for you – you are responsible for taking care of the carpets yourself. You should rent a steam-cleaning machine and clean the carpets yourself or hire a steam-cleaning company whenever you notice your carpets are getting dirty.

When you move out, you should also make sure that your carpets are clean – you will be charged if we have to clean or replace your carpets after you have moved out. If you do clean your carpets when you move out, be sure to give us the receipt for the steam-cleaning machine or company that you hired to take care of this. You can give us a written, signed and dated note saying that you used your own machine if you cleaned the carpets yourself and did not pay to have it done.

## Painting

Most of our apartments and houses use three different types of paint:

1. Antique white – flat finish
2. Antique white – eggshell finish
3. Manilla tan – flat or eggshell finish

The flat paints cannot be washed. We use them because they make the walls look nice and smooth and the flat paint doesn't show any potential imperfections as much as glossier paints do. Unfortunately, it is hard to clean off scuffs, dirt, etc. from walls painted with flat paint. It is easier to just paint over such blemishes. If you need some paint for touching up any such areas, come to our office and we will give you a little for such purposes. We do not come in to paint for you; you must do the touch-ups yourself.

The eggshell finish is a little bit glossy, and is therefore easier to clean. Your bathroom and/or kitchen may be painted with eggshell.

According to the terms of your lease, you are not supposed to repaint your apartment or home to your own tastes without our knowledge or permission. If you have been renting your place for a year or more and you have a certain painting color or idea in mind, please call our office first to convey your thoughts and get an approval before making any changes to the paint color of your rental. If you repaint your rental to a different color without our permission, when you move out you will be charged for the materials and labor needed to restore your rental back to one of our standard colors.

## Lawn Maintenance

Most apartment dwellers don't have to worry about mowing grass, etc., because we take care of that. They do have to worry about cleaning up after their dog, though, because our mowers get very testy when they have to mow through piles of dog poop. If it gets in their mower wheels, they will have to breathe and smell that for the rest of the day. Having an animal in an apartment is a huge privilege, and renters MUST be responsible for their pets. If our mowers or other staff have to clean up after your animal, expect to receive a bill for this. And ultimately if you do not comply, you will be forced to get rid of that pet.

Renters who live in most houses or duplexes are expected to maintain their own yards. You must keep the grass mowed AND take care of your bushes and flowers. This includes trimming the bushes, and raking the leaves in the fall. If you fail to mow your grass for several weeks, we will send our mowing staff to do it and will bill you for taking care of the problem. The same goes with your bushes.

If you really don't want to bother with your mowing and are unable to find someone on your own to hire to take care of it, we can recommend several companies that we already use who can give you a quote and do the job for you.

## **Giving Notice when you Move**

While we wish you would stay living in your rental forever, we understand that there will come a time that most tenants will move. If you are thinking of moving because you need a larger or smaller place or would like a different location in the greater Mansfield area, please check with us first – we have over 1100 residential rental properties in the greater Mansfield area and we would much rather help relocate you to another place of ours than lose you entirely as a renter. If, however, your circumstances will not allow you to stay with our company, then do please make sure that you give proper notice as required by your lease. We ask that you give a full CALENDAR month's written notice when you move – this means that if you are moving out at the end of the month, you must have given notice no later than the 1<sup>st</sup> of that month. If you plan on moving out sometime in the middle of the month, you will still need to pay rent for that entire month. Remember that we require WRITTEN notice – we have a form at our office that you may fill out with the required information, or you may write your own letter or email – be sure to include your name, where you currently live, when you are moving, your forwarding address, and your reason for moving. If all of this information is not given, we may not consider your notice to be valid, and may not be able to return your security deposit to you. If you have any questions about whether your notice is sufficient, please be sure to ask us to verify that we have received and accepted it once you have submitted it to us. Be aware that we require you to return your keys to our office to verify that you have moved out – there is a drop slot at our office where you can put the keys if you wish to leave them at night or on a weekend. Please be sure to label the keys if you drop them off!

Please be sure to give our office your forwarding address so we can either return your security deposit or remaining balance thereof, or send you a bill if we determine that you owe charges in excess of the amount of the deposit you paid.

## **Showing your Apartment or House**

The whole reason for requiring tenants to give a month's notice when they intend to vacate their apartment or house is so that the landlord has a chance to advertise their unit and line up a new renter. Therefore, it is necessary for the landlord to be able to show your home to prospective new renters, so they

can see what it looks like and decide whether they want to rent it or not. Your cooperation with this process is much appreciated.

We will attempt to set up an appointment with you to show your place to an interested party. If we are not able to contact you, we may show your place anyway. We will either leave you a phone message or a note on your door to let you know that we will be showing your unit the next day. You do not have the right to refuse us entry to your unit to show it once you have given us notice of your intent to vacate. If you sabotage this process, then your months' notice will be considered null and void, so we will consider you to have moved without giving proper notice. This will have a negative impact on both how your security deposit refund is calculated and on the type of reference we will give to any future landlord of yours.

## **Charges against your Security Deposit**

Once you move out, we have 30 days from the date you return your keys to our office to calculate your security deposit return. We are hopeful that you will get all of your security deposit back, because this will make you happy, and we will also be happy because that means that you gave proper notice and left your place in excellent condition and we will not have to paint, clean, or do any repairs to your rental unit after you move out. We love it when tenants are responsible and we get to give them back their full deposit!

Unfortunately many tenants end up having deductions taken from their security deposit because they fail to meet some of their obligations. When you move out, ask yourself the following questions: Have you satisfied the full length of your lease? If not, you will not get your deposit back, and will also be subject to a releasing fee – normally equal to 50% of one month's rent. If you have some extenuating circumstance that requires you to move out before the end of your leasing period, please contact our office as soon as you realize you need to break your lease – let us know about your circumstances and see if there is anything we can do to help you avoid being held liable for the balance of your lease.

Another question to ask yourself – have you given a proper FULL CALENDAR MONTH notice of your intention of moving? This does not mean 30 days from, for example, the 13<sup>th</sup> of one month to the 13<sup>th</sup> of the next month; it means an ENTIRE calendar month. If you are moving out by, say, March 31, then you will need to submit your written notice to our office no later than March 1. If you fail to do this, you will be held liable for whatever portion of the month that rent is not paid, and this will be deducted from your security deposit.

Also ask yourself – is your apartment clean and in good condition – does it look pretty much the way it did when you moved in, and if you were a new tenant just coming in to rent your place, would you be happy to move right in to your rental in the condition it is in? If not, then expect that some deductions will be made from your deposit. Your lease should have a section titled “How to Vacate Your Rental Property” – be sure to

go over this list before you move out to make sure you have done what you can to maximize the amount of your deposit that you will get back. If you cannot find your lease, ask our office for a copy before you move out so you can make sure that you have taken care of all important conditions.

We do realize that there will be reasonable wear and tear to your apartment after you have lived there for a while. However, we should not have to, for example, repaint your entire apartment after you have lived there for less than a year. Charges for repainting your apartment are reduced the longer you live at your rental – for normal painting, you will be charged for labor and materials:

100% - if you have lived at your rental for 1 year or less

75% - if you have lived there between 1 and 2 years

50% - if you have lived there between 2 and 3 years

There will be no charge for normal painting if you have lived there over 3 years

If your rental has a lot of crayon or magic marker art on the wall or excessive stains from nicotine or candles or anything else, you will be charged for 100% of materials and labor for any primer/sealer that we may need to apply to your walls prior to repainting them. You will also be charged for any holes or other damage that we need to repair in the drywall.

If your rental is left in less-than-clean condition, charges will be assessed against you for the time that we have to spend to get your rental clean again. These charges, normally billed at \$15.00/hour, can be quite sizable if your stovetop and oven are filthy, your refrigerator is dirty, your bathtub and toilet need to be cleaned, etc. We also charge any time we have to spend removing any trash or belongings that you leave behind, and we also charge for disposal fees if we have to take large or excessive amounts of items to the landfill. As per your lease, we do also charge for having to steam-clean your carpets after you move. You can avoid the steam-cleaning charge by steam-cleaning your carpets yourself – be sure to give us a copy of your receipt if you paid to have it done, or write and sign a note to us letting us know that you did it yourself. Again, you can reduce or eliminate any of these cleaning-related charges if you take the time and effort to clean up before you leave! We would much rather give you money back than have to use our staff's time, effort, and materials to clean your place!

Charges will also be deducted from your deposit for any repairs we have to perform due to you or your guests causing damage beyond reasonable wear and tear. Examples of items we will bill you for include: destroyed bedroom doors, broken parts on stoves or refrigerators or medicine cabinets, carpeting that has been destroyed by cats, dogs, red koolaid, cigarette burns, etc. If your pets left behind an infestation of fleas, or you left us with an infestation of cockroaches or bedbugs, expect to be billed for extermination of those as well. In the event of excessive damage being done to the rental and extensive time being needed for repairs,

you may be billed for “downtime,” which is time over and above what is reasonable for the rental to be vacant to get it ready for a new tenant.

Additionally, any unpaid utility bills, repair bills, late fees, and unpaid rent will be deducted from your deposit as well. So will the cost of any ruts that your moving truck or vehicle puts in the yard , so be careful about driving onto the lawn of your property if it has recently rained! Finally, if you were responsible for mowing the grass at your rental, and you forget or neglect to mow it when you move, you will probably be charged for that as well. Persons who are evicted will also be assessed eviction fees, attorney fees, and writ fees if we have to file a writ to remove you from the property.

As you can see, if a person does not leave their rental property in very good condition or circumstances, their debt can be larger than the amount of their security deposit. When this happens, rather than getting a refund you will get a statement from us letting you know that you will not be getting a refund, as well as an itemized bill of the charges against your deposit. We will send this statement to your forwarding address, if you left us one. If you receive a statement from us, please contact us within 30 days to make arrangements to pay this bill – if it is excessive, we will allow you to make regular monthly payments towards it. If we do not receive a payment and over 30 days have passed, we will turn your account in to a collection agency, which will then add this debt to your credit report and will initiate collection activities against you. We hate to do this to anyone, so please try to avoid this and do the right thing – pay your rent and bills, give proper notice, and take good care of the property!

If you have any questions about possible charges for damages, please do bring them to our attention before you move out, so we can take a look at them and let you know how best to handle the problem. Be aware that we fully photograph each rental once the tenant has moved out in order to document its condition, especially any items that we think we will have to charge for. Make sure you take a good look at everything yourself before you leave so you are not surprised by any of the charges, and do ask to see the photos if you would like to dispute any items. An itemized list of charges will be given to you on a form we call the “Security Deposit Reconciliation.” This is not a perfect science, so if you see a charge on this form that you do not agree with, please write down your objections, concerns, or questions and submit them to our office, along with a good phone number or address where you may be reached. We will review your concerns and perhaps adjust any contested items and reconnect with you about them.

## **Infestations**

If you experience a problem with an infestation, we would like you to deal with it yourself before you expect us to help, unless it is a bedbug, cockroach or termite problem. These three issues should be brought to

our attention right away, so we can take action before it spreads. If you have a mouse problem, buy some traps, poison or sticky plates and attempt to handle it yourself. If you have spiders, ants or a bees nest, buy some spray.

If you have tried to solve the problem yourself and your attempts have failed, give us a call for help.

In some cases, like when your lifestyle or even your bad luck has caused your place to be infested with bedbugs, roaches, or mice, etc., we will treat for the problem but we expect to be reimbursed for any costs incurred by us. Think about it; isn't it only fair that you be responsible for such a problem if it was caused by you or your visiting guests? Please be honorable and make it right.

Bedbugs have made a big comeback in recent years and they are very difficult and expensive to get rid of. You can get them by riding on the bus, in taxis, sitting in restaurants or the movie theater, at the library or visiting friends or relatives' houses that may be infested. Even guests who come to visit you may inadvertently bring bed bugs in on their clothes and infect your furniture and home. One has to be diligent and careful to prevent this problem. Do not ignore infestation problems because the issue will get worse and spread to your neighbors' apartments.

## **Parking Rules (for apartment buildings and duplexes)**

1. All tenant's motor vehicles shall be parked in their carports or designated spaces. If there are no designated spaces, then park in the parking lot wherever you wish or are able, but do not park in the lane or in the grass or in a manner that blocks any other vehicle from coming in or going out.
2. In the event of a mechanical breakdown of a motor vehicle, the owner of such vehicle shall push the vehicle out of the right-of-way and remove the motor vehicle from the parking lot as soon as a tow truck can be obtained.
3. No car washing shall be permitted except at rentals where the tenant is paying for their own water bill.
4. No person shall park a motor vehicle that is damaged or inoperable on our property. Costs or expenses will apply to the tenant for any vehicle that we have to have towed from the property.
5. There is a two-car parking limit per rental unit at any of our apartments or townhouses, as there is limited space for vehicles.

## Pets

1. No animal, livestock, or fowl other than a pet or service animal approved by the management office of Stimens apartments are allowed. Approved pets are subject to payment of a separate pet deposit of minimum of \$150, (\$100 of which is non-refundable), and added minimum monthly pet rent of \$25.
  2. Documented service animals are welcome and are not considered “pets”.
  3. The maximum weight for a pet dog varies by location – generally the smaller the apartment and the more apartment units at the same location the smaller the allowed dog.
  4. No dangerous animal or pet shall be permitted to be in the apartments at any time.
  5. No breed of dog specifically identified by local ordinance shall be permitted on the premises. For instance, as of the date this Manual was written, the City of Mansfield specifically prohibits “*chickens or other poultry,*” “*any horse, pony, cow, hog, calf, goat or other hoofed animal,*” and “*a dog that, without provocation and subject to subsection (a)(4)B. of Mansfield Code 505.03,*
    1. *Has killed or caused serious injury to any person,*
    2. *Has caused injury, other than killing or serious injury, to any person, or has killed another domesticated animal.*
- (\*See Section 505.03 of the Mansfield Codified Ordinances for the most current Mansfield law)
6. No commercial breeding of animals of any kind shall be allowed on the property.
  7. No animals shall be permitted to make excessive noise. For the purpose of this provision “excessive noise” shall be deemed to mean any noise which is annoying or disturbing to any neighbors.
  8. The animal owner is financially responsible for any personal injury or property damage caused by their animal.
  9. No animal shall be permitted to soil or damage any part of the property whether by waste, excrement or otherwise. In the event of the same, the owner of the animal shall make good such damage and immediately remove such excrement. (*i.e., clean up your dog’s poop ASAP!*)
  10. Dogs shall be on a leash at all times when they are outdoors, unless tenant lives in a single-family home with a fenced yard and dog is within the confines of a completely-fenced area.
  11. All dogs must have an up-to-date dog license, or risk being reported to the County Dog Warden.
  12. Bringing a dog or cat into your rental without first obtaining approval from us is considered a violation of your lease and could result in an eviction complaint being filed against you.

## Things to be Familiar With in your Apartment or House

### **Electrical Service Panel or “Breaker Box”**

Most apartments, and all houses, have a main electric service panel that has circuit breakers in it that provide electric current to the different areas and functions in your home. Typically there will be a separate breaker for outlets in a few different rooms, for lights in a few rooms, and for the kitchen area, and larger breakers or switches for your range, water heater, dryer, (if you have one), and electric baseboard heaters if you have those. Air conditioners will also have their own breaker if they are 220 volts instead of 110. Sometimes there is a very large “main breaker” that is located at the top of your electric panel or sometimes out by your electric meter. If you turn this off, it will shut off ALL electric to your home.

We encourage you to take the time to locate your electric panel and main shut-off so that you are familiar with it in the event that you ever have an electrical problem. These main electrical panels are usually located in the basement, or the garage, or in a closet, or even on a bedroom wall behind a bedroom door. Once you have discovered where the panel is in your home, please share this knowledge with other responsible people in your household so that everyone will know about it.

Sometimes you may overload a circuit breaker in your home. This is especially true for the kitchen area, where you might have the microwave oven, toaster, coffeemaker, etc. going at the same time. Having too many electrical devices trying to pull power from the same breaker at once will overheat the electric wires, which results in the breaker tripping itself as a safety measure. If this happens to you, try to turn off or even unplug one of the devices you were using, and then reset your tripped breaker. The tripped breaker should either show a red-orange bar or be in the “off” position. If none of the breakers looks tripped, try to feel each of the breaker switches – a tripped breaker will feel wobbly, while the other breakers should feel solid in the “on” position. Once you have located the tripped breaker, push it solidly to the “off” position, and then back solidly to the “on” position. The power for the affected area should now have come back on.

If you are not able to find a tripped breaker in your breaker box, see if the outlet that your affected appliances were plugged into is a GFCI outlet. GFCI, (ground-fault circuit interrupter), outlets, aka GFI’s, are located in many kitchens, bathrooms, basements, and sometimes garages or

even right by your main electrical panel. These outlets started being widely installed about ten or fifteen years ago, and are designed to protect people from being electrocuted when they are in a wet or damp area, like around a sink or a wet basement or garage floor. These outlets have two little buttons between the two outlet plugs. One of them should be marked “reset.” Unplug anything you have plugged into the GFI outlet and press the “reset” button. Try to plug one of your devices back in to the outlet and see if it comes back on.

If you still don't have power to part of your home after trying the above fixes, make sure that you do have power in other areas of your home. If so, then call our office and we will have to send someone over to try to take care of the problem. If your entire rental unit has no electric and you live in a multi-unit rental, check to see if anyone else in your building has electric. If you live in a single-family home, look outside and see if your neighbors have their electric on. If you appear to be the only one around you with no electric, and the electric service at your rental is in your own name, check to make sure that you have paid your electric bill! If others around you also have no electric, you should call the utility provider to see if there is an area-wide power outage. Please do call our office if you cannot figure out the reason for your electric outage, and we will send someone out if needed.

If you should ever experience an electrical fire, please try to shut off the affected breaker immediately, and then put the fire out if you think you can. We encourage you to keep at least one small fire extinguisher in your apartment, especially one somewhere in your kitchen. If you are panicking and do not know which breaker to turn off, turn them all off! Circuit breakers should have each breaker marked as to which areas of your home each operates, but not all panels are marked or have legible markings.

Stove fires are a bit more tricky than other fires. If you have a pan of greasy food on your rangetop that is on fire, do NOT throw a bucket of water on it – this could cause the flames to shoot upward and catch your cabinets on fire, and if you have an electric stove you may also electrocute yourself! Instead, use a fire extinguisher if you have one, or quickly soak a towel with water and use the wet towel to smother the flames. If your breaker box is nearby, be sure to shut off the breaker first if at all possible! (If you have a gas stove, shut off the burner or oven immediately!)

Once you have put out your electric fire, do be sure to let our office know so we can send someone out to make sure there is no ongoing danger to you, and fix any outlets, wires, or breakers that may need to be repaired or replaced.

## **Ranges**

It is important to keep your ranges clean. Grease and grime can catch on fire. Also, cockroaches are attracted and fed by this. Do not leave cooking food on stove top unattended. We have had a few serious fires due to this. It is advisable to keep a small fire extinguisher close at hand for emergencies!

Ranges are to be used for their intended purpose of cooking food ONLY! They are not to be used to heat your apartment or house – if you have a problem with your heating system, notify our office immediately and request that we bring you a portable heater if we cannot immediately fix the problem. Do NOT try to use your stove to heat your residence!

## **Water Shut-Offs**

Some apartments and all houses have a main water supply shut-off valve. You should familiarize yourself and all other occupants of your rental with the location of these valves in case you ever have an emergency involving water leaking or flooding. These main valves are located in places like the basement or a closet. They are usually located near your water meter, if your rental has one.

In a multi-family apartment building the main is sometimes located by the water heater. Not all apartments have a main shut-off, but many have shut-off valves under each sink, by the water heater, and on the wall below the back of the toilet. If there is not a main shut-off in your apartment, then there will be a main shut-off for your entire apartment building somewhere by your building – either in one of the other apartments, or in a building closet or basement, or even in a manhole outside the end of your apartment building.

Sometimes a supply line to a faucet or toilet will burst or start leaking badly. If this ever happens, try to shut the shut-off valve off. Often the valve will be rusty or hard to turn because of lack of use, so try to grab the valve with a washcloth or old rag to protect your hand. Sometimes even this will not work, so if possible try to use a pair of channel locks, vice-grips, or pair of plyers to

turn the valve. If the valve by the leaking supply line cannot be shut off, try to turn off the valves by the water heater. If no luck there, try the main shut-off valve. Of course, if all else fails, call all of our emergency numbers until you get someone to help, since we do consider a major water leak to be an emergency!

If for some reason you have to shut the valve off to your toilet and one of our maintenance staff is not available to come fix your problem immediately, you can still flush the toilet by emptying a bucket or big pan of water directly into the toilet bowl. This should keep you going until the maintenance person can get there to fix the problem for you.

Note: if you plan to be away from your rental property for an extended period of time, such as a vacation or business trip or family emergency, PLEASE be sure to check all of your faucets and toilets to make sure that they are not running, dripping, or leaking while you are gone. If you have a water shut-off for your individual rental, you may wish to turn it off just in case there are any problems while you are gone. If you are leaving in the winter, please be sure to leave your heat on while you are gone so your pipes will not freeze – you can turn the heat down to around 50-55°. If you have washer and dryer hookups, please turn off the supply lines to the washer while you are gone. Leave yourself a note somewhere to remind yourself to turn the water back on when you get back!

## **Garbage Disposals**

Some rentals are equipped with garbage disposals. Even if you don't like using them, you should run them briefly about one time every two weeks, just to make sure they don't get rusty and seize-up.

When you use a disposal, be sure to run a lot of water while you are grinding up your garbage so that the waste will be washed away and not get thick and jammed up in your drain pipes. Some of the worst things to clog up your system are potato peels, cabbage, and thick casseroles. So use lots of water and take your time grinding up these things!

Be careful to not get spoons, beer caps, pennies, etc. in your disposal. These things will jam up the blades. If you do, turn your disposal switch off, reach down into the disposal with your hand, and remove the foreign object if you can. Sometimes the disposal won't grind or work anymore; it

will just hum. Shut it off and use either an Allen wrench or hex key in the bottom of the disposal to manually grind up the object, or stick a broomstick into the disposal opening from above and try to move and dislodge the foreign object. Afterwards try the disposal switch to see if it will now run. If it still hums, find the reset button on the very bottom of the unit and push it in. Now the garbage disposal should run OK. If not, please notify us.

## **Furnaces and Air Conditioners**

When you move in, your heating system, and your air conditioning, if you have it, should be in good working order. If either of those systems should malfunction after you have moved in, please do notify our office as soon as possible so that we can get someone over there to take care of the problem for you. Please be aware that these systems do need to be serviced periodically to keep them working properly, and that your cooperation is expected with this.

Baseboard heaters do not require much maintenance, but renters who have that type of heat need to be careful to not put objects on the heaters (especially low hanging curtains or towels) and to leave space in between the heaters and any objects or furniture.

Air conditioners need to be kept clean to run efficiently. Most wall unit air conditioners have a small filter that can be slid out and washed with hot water. Please try to check this filter every month or so to make sure that it is not clogged. You should also check the outside portion of your air conditioner, either the back of your wall unit or the outside condenser if you have central air. These can get clogged with things like dead leaves or dandelion or cottonwood fuzz, and should be swept or vacuumed so they can breathe better.

For those renters whose units have furnaces and/or central air conditioning, at least once a year, but hopefully twice a year, we will attempt to enter your house or apartment to service your furnace and/or your air conditioning unit. Both of these systems have filters that need to be changed periodically. This is very important for two reasons –

Reason #1: if the filter is dirty and partially clogged, the appliance will have to work much harder to deliver the level of service you want. Inefficient operation means that your utility bill to run this appliance will cost you a lot more.

Reason #2: if the filter is so dirty that the appliance cannot breathe, the furnace or air conditioner will be ruined and will stop working. We do not want your furnace to quit when it is 5°F outside or your air conditioner to fail when it is 92°F, and of course we do not want to have to buy a new furnace or A.C. to install! If we determine that the furnace or air conditioner has failed due to negligence on your part, you may be billed for all or part of the cost of any necessary repair or replacement of that system.

Changing furnace and air conditioning filters is something that we use as “fill-in work” for our maintenance staff for those times when they are not out fixing something else. We usually try to notify you in advance with a phone call or by posting notices a day or two in advance of our intent to do this work, but sometimes we may just show up at your rental and ask if it is convenient for you for us to do the service. If it is not convenient for you at that time, just let the maintenance person know and either let them know when they can come back, or contact our office to schedule a time for this service to be performed.

If you want to extend the life of your appliances AND reduce your gas and/or electric consumption, you should change your filters yourself more frequently than we are able to do. On your furnace, the filter is usually a big flat piece of fiberglass mesh with a cardboard frame, usually about an inch thick, that slides into a slot somewhere in the furnace or cold air return. These filters are usually not cleanable, so it is best for you to replace the old one with a brand new one. If you buy your own replacement filter from someplace like Walmart or a hardware store, they are usually pretty cheap, around \$2.00 or \$3.00. If you want a really good filter that is hypoallergenic, the cost is somewhat higher, but they do give your home cleaner air with fewer allergens.

## **Refrigerators**

If there is a refrigerator in your rental when you move in, it should be in good working order, and we ask that you take care of this expensive appliance to help it keep working properly. If you fail to take good care of your refrigerator, you could be charged if we have to replace it.

Here are some ‘dos and don’ts’ for taking care of your refrigerator:

DO clean the seals on your fridge and freezer doors every couple of months or more often.

DO keep the outside coils of your refrigerator clean of dust and cobwebs. This will keep it running more efficiently, which will not only extend the life of the appliance but will also help lower your electric bill. These coils are either on the back of your refrigerator or underneath it. DO keep the plastic grill on the bottom of the front of your refrigerator clean, too.

DO check behind that plastic grill to see if there is a drainage pan behind the grill, and if there is one, then remember to empty it every months or so, as needed.

DO wipe up spilled food and liquids from the inside of your refrigerator as quickly as possible to avoid leaving stains and odors that may require us to replace your refrigerator after you move out.

Don't keep opening your refrigerator or freezer repeatedly if there is an electrical outage. The contents will keep cold longer if the appliance doors are kept shut.

Don't ever try to clean the ice out of your freezer with a knife. You may puncture the freezer wall and the Freon will leak out, destroying the refrigerator.

## Conclusion

We hope you have found this Renter's Manual to be helpful and informative. The basic point here is that we want you to be informed, be proactive, use common sense, and exercise courtesy and good judgment. If you have any questions about anything in this document, please contact our office at 419-774-9292 or [stimensapts@yahoo.com](mailto:stimensapts@yahoo.com). We hope that your stay with us will be pleasant, and we thank you for allowing us to provide you with your new home!

Received by : \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_