



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Be Safe in Your New Apartment and Protect Next Year's Security Deposit – Tips from TRC

Much of the moving out is over...but the Tenant Resource Center has some tips for those moving in. Know how to keep your new apartment safe and protect your new security deposit from illegal withholding next year!

BE SAFE IN YOUR NEW APARTMENT

Be sure to inspect your new unit closely for locks and other safety features, and report anything that is not functioning properly to the landlord right away. Be aware of your surroundings while you are moving and stay safe!

Door locks, chains, and deadbolts. Always lock your doors—even when you are home. Don't make your apartment and yourself easy targets for intruders by propping your door open or leaving it unlocked for friends or roommates. Always use your deadbolt, and if you don't have one at least an inch long, request that your landlord install one.

Sliding doors. Unsecured sliding doors are a common target for unauthorized entry. Be sure to use your patio door lock, plus a secondary locking device such as a "charlie bar"—a brace that prevents the door from sliding open and is hard to dislodge from the outside.

Window and ventilation locks. All first floor and second floor windows are required to have both regular locks, which do not allow the window to open at all, and ventilation locks, which allow the window to open a few inches for ventilation but not wide enough to allow entry. These locks, when installed and used properly, will not allow entry without breaking glass. If locks are missing or don't work, request repairs.

Security-locked entrances. Controlled-access buildings are only secure if the common doors remain closed and locked when not in use. Remember, if you prop them open, you are compromising the safety of the whole building. Security locking systems are required in Madison for common entrances.

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Business Phone: (608) 257-0143 Fax: (608) 286-0804

Housing Counseling: (608) 257-0006 or outside of Dane County 1-877-238-RENT (7368)

Mediation: (608) 257-2799 Housing Help Desk: (608) 242-7406

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Keys. Never label your keys or key chain with your house or unit number. If you lose them, your apartment will be at risk. Landlords are not obligated to change the locks between tenants, but if you'd like the locks rekeyed and the landlord does not want to do it, you could offer to pay for the rekeying. You can ask your landlord for extra sets of keys, but you may be required to pay a small deposit.

Door viewer. Always use your door viewer before you open your door for someone. If the door viewer is broken or not provided, notify the landlord.

Common area lighting. Be sure hallways and basements have adequate lighting. If bulbs are burned out, notify the landlord right away. Common area lighting is required by Madison General Ordinances. Parking lots for more than three cars must have lighting.

Smoke Detectors. A new smoke alarm ordinance goes into effect on Saturday August 15, 2009. There are new regulations on the type of detectors allowed and their location within the apartment. Please double check that your detectors are up to date, because even though alarms can be annoying when you burn your food, they do save lives. For more information about this new requirement visit the city's website: [www.cityofmadison.com/fire/ImpactofSmokeDetector.htm](http://www.cityofmadison.com/fire/ImpactofSmokeDetector.htm).

Getting repairs completed. In most instances, the above-mentioned security measures are required by local building codes. Always notify the landlord if repairs are needed. If the landlord does not respond in a timely manner, call the City of Madison building inspector at 266-4551.

If your apartment is in poor condition when you move in, contact the landlord immediately to report the repairs and cleaning that need to be done and negotiate a deadline for those to be completed. If the landlord agrees to compensate you for cleaning or repairs that you perform, be sure to put your agreement in writing, whether it's a reimbursement or a rent credit or some other arrangement.

## FOLLOW THESE TIPS TO PROTECT NEXT YEAR'S SECURITY DEPOSIT

Fill out a check-in form and make sure you keep a copy. In the City of Madison the landlord is required to furnish you with one; if s/he doesn't, s/he cannot deduct for cleaning or damages. If you need a check-in form for your new apartment, download one from TRC's website at <http://www.tenantresourcecenter.org/forms/>. **NO INTERNET ACCESS? STOP AT TRC FOR FREE CHECK-IN FORMS AND MUCH MORE!** When you arrive at your new place, take the time to thoroughly inspect your apartment and document ALL existing damage and wear and tear on your check-in form, so that you won't be charged for those items when you move out next year.

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