

Changing the Locks in an Emergency

In an emergency, where the rental premises or the health and safety of the tenant are at risk, the tenant may change or re-key the locks without prior permission of the landlord. This is the only situation where a tenant may do this. The tenant needs to give the landlord a key within 48 hours or as soon as possible, and the landlord has the right to replace the altered lock (MGO 32.05(2)).

Other Useful Information

Notice Required Before Landlord Entry

According to City of Madison ordinances, the landlord or any agents of the landlord must give a 24-hour notice before entering your apartment. Entry is permitted for repairs, inspections or in an emergency (MGO 32.05(1)). (In an emergency, the 24-hour notice is not required.) If your landlord is entering without notice, at unreasonable times or for an inappropriate purpose, notify the landlord in writing that you request proper notification before entry. If the person entering without notice is a resident manager or an off-site manager, but not the owner, send a copy of the letter to the person's supervisor or the actual owner of the property. If unauthorized entry continues, and makes you feel unsafe, call the police to file a report.

Some information in this flyer is adapted from "Security Awareness Checklist" courtesy of J&K Lock and Security Professionals and the Apartment Association of South Central Wisconsin.



Apartment Safety in the City of Madison



Tenant Resource Center

1202 Williamson St., Suite A
Madison, WI 53703

9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m., Monday – Friday

Rental Rights (608) 257-0006

Toll-free (877) 238 RENT (7368)

asktrc@tenantresourcecenter.org

Mediation (608) 257-2799

Business Line (608) 257-0143

www.tenantresourcecenter.org

Housing Help Desk

1819 Aberg Ave. Room 2

Madison, WI 53704

(Dane County Job Center)

(608) 242-7406, 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

If you need an interpreter, materials in alternate formats, or other accommodations to access our services, call our office at (608) 257-0143.

Si Ud. necesita servicios en español, llame al (608) 257-0143.

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The **Tenant Resource Center** is a non-profit, membership organization dedicated to promoting positive relations between rental housing consumers and providers throughout Wisconsin. By providing information and referrals, education about rental rights and responsibilities, and access to conflict resolution, we empower the community to obtain and maintain quality affordable housing.

No part of this brochure should be regarded as legal advice or considered a replacement of a landlord's or tenant's responsibility to be familiar with the law. If you need legal assistance, seek the services of a Wisconsin housing attorney.

Information in this brochure is only applicable for apartments located in the City of Madison. Other municipalities may require safety features for rental units as well. If you live elsewhere, check the phonebook for your local building inspector and ask about what is required for your area.

Apartment Safety

Whether you are about to move to a new apartment or are already living somewhere in the City of Madison, there are several safety tips you should be aware of and steps you can take to ensure your safety.

Safety Tips

Door Locks, Door Chains, and Dead Bolts

Always lock your deadbolt—both when you leave and after you get home. A deadbolt provides the most security available by a standard lock when used properly. The deadbolt should be at least an inch long. Do not prop your door open or leave it open for friends or roommates.

Window Locks and Ventilation Locks

Always lock your windows. All first floor windows or windows accessible by a platform or fire escape 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.

Key Use Policy

Never label your keys or key chain with your house or unit number. If you lose them, your residence will be at risk. If you need extra sets of keys, ask the landlord. (You may be required to pay a small deposit for extra keys.) If the locks were not re-keyed before you moved in, you may ask the landlord to do so. (You may have to pay this expense yourself, however, as the landlord is not obligated to change the locks between tenants.)

Security Locked (Controlled Access) 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.

Sliding Door Locks and Secondary Security Devices

Unsecured sliding doors are a common target for unauthorized entry. Be sure your patio door lock mechanism locks securely when closed. A secondary locking device such as a stick can be placed in the sliding track to prevent the door from opening.

Common Area Lighting

Be sure common areas have adequate lighting. If bulbs are burned out, notify the landlord right away.

Window Coverings

Keep your curtains or blinds closed if you are away from home for an extended period of time. Open window coverings make it easy for an intruder to see that you are either not home, or home alone. If window coverings are not provided, ask the landlord if he or she will provide them.

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 immediately.

Check Out the Area Before You Rent

Call the City of Madison Police Department's non-emergency number (608-255-2345) and ask to speak with the neighborhood officer for the area you are thinking about moving into. If possible, walk around the neighborhood yourself and talk with current residents about any safety concerns they have about the area.

Action Steps

Note Needed Repairs on Your Check-in Form

When you move in to your new apartment in the City of Madison, the landlord is required to give you a written check-in sheet to fill out and return (MGO 32.07(5)). The check-in sheet is a great place to note safety related repair problems. Inspect your apartment for the following safety features:

- Security-locked entrances to common areas
- Deadbolt lock
- Window locks and ventilation locks
- Sliding door locks
- Lighting in common areas
- Door viewer.

Contact Landlord to Request Repairs

Even if you marked security repairs needed on your check-in form, put repair requests in writing to your landlord, reminding him/her that it is a safety issue. Date the request and keep a copy of it for your own records.

Document Needed Repairs

Document the security repairs that are needed by taking pictures and keeping a log of actions you take, like contacting the landlord and calling building inspection.

Call Building Inspection

In most instances, the security measures listed in this brochure are required by the City of Madison building code. If your landlord does not respond to your repair requests, notify Building Inspection. In the City of Madison, the number is 608-266-4551.