



Section 8 Owner News - July 2012



Housing Quality Standards – Smoke Detectors

On June 21, the life of a young woman was cut short in a fatal house fire in Berkeley. Our sympathies go out to her family, and the landlord who may be struggling to accept the fact that someone lost their life in his/her property.



Horrifying news like this reminds us all of the importance of having working smoke detectors in our homes, and in our rental units. We check for functioning smoke detectors during all of our inspections (one required in the hallway of each floor and one in each bedroom), and we encourage you to make it a part of your routine, ongoing management of your units. **Check the smoke detector yourself, or confirm with the tenant that it is working.** It may be too much to



incorporate this into your monthly rent collection efforts, but building this routine into the “Daylight Savings” time change that occurs twice a year in the Fall and Spring, may be a good alternative. Finally, if you can’t remember when you purchased the smoke detector – it may be time to buy new, improved equipment. By some reports, the average life of a smoke detector is 10 years or less. But batteries should be changed 1 – 2 times a year.

Landlord File Update

Thank you for responding to our request to update your file. The information you provided helped us correct discrepancies in our records, allowed us to revise our records so that payments are distributed per your instructions, and will result in you receiving an accurate 1099 at the end of the year!

Tip Please be certain to notify BHA any time you change your phone/email/address. This is important both for HAP checks and also so that staff may notify you in case of emergency.

Rent Increases

In accordance with HUD policies, owners have always been required to limit rent increases to one request per 12 month period. In March 2012 the BHA Board adopted a policy that established parameters for when such requests must be submitted so that they can be considered as part of the participants’ annual recertification. To allow time for processing and advance notice to the family of any increase in family rent portion, your request must be shared with the family and BHA no less than 60-days prior to the annual recertification. In making a request owners should note:

1. Any increase that results in a rent equal to the Payment Standard will mean the family will not receive an allowance for tenant paid utilities (gas, electricity, water, garbage).
2. Any increase that results in a rent that exceeds the Payment Standard will be paid by the family, not BHA.
3. If the family is over-housed (eligible for a 1 bedroom voucher, but living in a 2 bedroom unit), BHA’s rental subsidy will be based on the smaller voucher size.

Requests that do not comply with the established time line will not be honored. If you are considering a rent increase, but uncertain about the recertification date, contact the Housing Specialist assigned to your tenant.



2-Bedroom Units

We have a general goal of expanding the housing options in Berkeley for families with Section 8 Vouchers, and encourage you to consider increasing your participation. This is a special appeal to identify additional two bedroom units, in apartments, duplex-four plex properties, and single family homes. You may be aware that we are transferring ownership of the 75 units of large family (3 and 4 bedroom) affordable housing rental units we currently own and manage. A number of the families are long-term, stable renters, who are now empty nesters, and need to relocate to a smaller 1 or 2 bedroom unit. We would like to assist these families with remaining in Berkeley – if they choose to do so. We also need two bedroom units for

some of our senior and/or disabled households that have a live-in aid to assist them with daily living activities. If you have or anticipate a 2 bedroom vacancy we would appreciate your consideration of renting to a family with Section 8 Rental Assistance. If you offer the unit to one of our Public Housing residents, we can provide you a landlord reference, and will pay 100% of the Security Deposit. For more information please contact Latifa Lewis, Executive Assistant at 981-5483 or llewis@ci.berkeley.ca.us.

I just Had an Inspection!

Several landlords have questioned why they received two inspections in a 12 month period. In accordance with HUD regulations, BHA must inspect every assisted unit at least once every 12 months. HUD maintains records, and generates a “late inspections” report each month showing all units where the last inspection was performed 13 or more months prior. We realize that owners and families have busy lives, and our initial inspection date may not be convenient. So, in an effort to ensure that we meet this important HUD requirement, we build in a 90-day grace period. This allows time for rescheduling the inspection, provides a 30-day repair period (if necessary), and still meet the 12 month HUD requirement. What does this mean? Your unit(s) will be inspected once every 10 months rather than 12. Thus, if your unit was inspected in January 2012, the next inspection is due no later than January 2013; we would schedule the inspection for November 2012 (2nd inspection in a calendar year) – to increase the probability of having an on-time “passed” inspection. Two inspections in one calendar year should only occur approximately once every 4 years, but it is true “annual” inspections really are on a 10 month cycle, rather than 12 months. There is one other reason you may have an inspection twice a year: your unit may be selected in a random draw of “quality control” inspections that must occur on a quarterly basis, another HUD requirement. We conduct approximately 30 of these quality control inspections per year, in October, January, April, and July. Staff and inspectors thank you for your patience and flexibility in these matters!

When Can the Family Move-in?

The safest answer is after the lease is signed by the family, and after the HAP contract is signed by both, owner and BHA. There are four important milestones:

1. The unit must pass the Housing Quality Standards inspection on or before the effective date of the contract; NO EXCEPTIONS.
2. BHA must determine that the rent requested is reasonable for the unit, based on (a) the inspection results and (b) data you provide, and/or data obtained from our sources, including the unit’s various amenities. Rent will be negotiated based on these findings. Note: rent will not necessarily be “at the payment standard” (maximum amount BHA can pay), which is often confused as being the amount of rent automatically paid to owners, if requested.
3. BHA must have a signed copy of the lease BEFORE we can execute the HAP contract. You may use your standard rental lease – provided it does not include any discriminatory language or excessive fees.
4. The HAP contract must be fully executed (signed by owner and BHA) within 60 calendar days of the effective date or no payments can be made. NO EXCEPTIONS. If you have not received a copy of the HAP contract within 14-calendar days of the passed inspection, follow up with Tilda Barnes, Housing Specialist for New Contracts, at 510-981-5489 or tbarnes@ci.berkeley.ca.us.

If you give the family keys to the unit before ALL of these steps, it is at your own risk, and BHA has no obligation to pay HAP. In some instances where these important milestones are not met, there is no flexibility granted by HUD that would allow us to pay HAP.

