

# BERKELEY RENTAL NEWS

Newsletter of the Berkeley Rent Stabilization Board

## RENTAL UNITS MUST BE SAFE AND HABITABLE

**S**tate law requires that all housing units rented for residential use be safe and habitable. Some of the requirements of state and local law are:

**1** All units must have effective waterproofing and weather protection of the roof and exterior walls. There should be no broken windows or doors.

**2** Plumbing and gas facilities must be in good working order. Hot and cold running water must be supplied and the fixtures must be in good repair.

**3** Heating must be adequate and heating fixtures maintained in good working order.

**4** Building grounds and common areas must be kept clean and free from debris, filth, rubbish, garbage, rodents and vermin. An adequate number of garbage receptacles must be provided.

**5** Floors, stairways and railings must be maintained in good repair.

**6** There must be an operable smoke detector in the common area outside of a bedroom in an apartment, in every bedroom in a rooming house, and on every floor in a house. Apartment buildings and rooming houses must also have an operable fire extinguisher on every floor.

**7** Each main swinging entry door must have a dead bolt lock that can be opened from the inside without a key.

**8** Rental units with window bars that do not have inside release mechanisms must have at least one emergency escape window in each bedroom. That is, one window in

each bedroom must have bars with the proper release mechanism or no bars at all.

### **W**ho to Call:

**F**or an inspection when there are uncorrected deficiencies in the unit, such as: leaks; defective heater, appliances, plumbing or electrical systems; floors or stairways in disrepair; missing smoke detectors; window bars that lack a release mechanism, call **RRI** (644-6445).

**F**or a gas leak or if you smell gas, first call the **Fire Department** (644-6875), then call PG&E.

**F**or no hot water, shock from an appliance, a partial power outage (if, for example, the lights work but the outlets do not), call **PG&E** (1-800-743-5000). Gas leaks, symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning and no hot water get an immediate response. PG&E also performs safety checks and adjustments on furnaces and other appliances and tests carbon monoxide levels in a unit.

**F**or potential fire hazards such as: dry grass, weeds, wood, etc.; locked or obstructed fire exits; no light in building hallways or exit corridors; a fire extinguisher that has not been serviced; or combustibles on the premises, call **Fire Prevention** (644-6158 or 644-6189).

**F**or potential health hazards such as: rats, mice, fleas, etc.; or garbage on the ground, call the **Health Department** (644-6510).

**F**or a broken, leaking or backed-up sewer, call **Public Works** (644-6620).

**F**or tenant and landlord rent adjustment petitions, call the **Rent Board** (644-6128).

### **City Council Considers Requiring Carbon Monoxide Detectors**

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colorless, odorless gas that results from burning fuel. In California, an average of 45 deaths each year result from accidental CO poisoning, according to the California Air Resources Board. Most CO poisoning is due to malfunctioning or improperly vented combustion appliances, like gas furnaces, gas and propane space heaters, and small barbecues.

The California Air Resources Board recommends annual furnace check-ups by a qualified professional. (PG&E provides free annual check-ups.) Fireplaces and wood stoves should also be checked and cleaned each year before use.

If you experience signs of CO exposure, which include shortness of breath, nausea, headaches, and dizziness, and think your health is at risk, you should call 911.

The Berkeley City Council is investigating the feasibility of requiring the installation of carbon monoxide detectors in multiple unit residential buildings.

### **2000 ANNUAL GENERAL ADJUSTMENT**

The year 2000 annual general adjustment (AGA) is \$6.00. A landlord who is in compliance with the Ordinance and the Regulations is eligible to impose the \$6.00 AGA for any unit that did not have a market rent set under the vacancy decontrol



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Sentinel Fair	
Housing .....	836-2687
Small Claims Legal	
Advisers .....	644-6303
Tenants Action	
Project .....	843-6601