

Safety & Security for Landlords

Safety and security issues are important for both landlords and tenants. If you are a landlord in Alberta, there are options under the *Residential Tenancies Act* for dealing with the safety and security of your rental property.

Locks and Security Devices

LANDLORD CHANGING THE LOCKS

Usually, you should not change the locks on any doors that the tenant uses unless:

- you give the tenant written notice and
- the tenant agrees in writing

If the tenant agrees, you must give them a key after changing the locks.

If you cannot notify the tenant or get them to agree, you must provide them with new keys after changing the locks.

You should only change the locks without notifying the tenant in an emergency. For example, if the lock is broken and the building is unsecure. You cannot change the locks because you have a dispute with your tenant.

Tip: Under the *Residential Tenancies Act (RTA)*, it is an offence to not provide the tenant with new key(s) if you change the locks.

You can only change the locks if:

- the tenant agrees to it
- you give the tenant a key as soon as you change the locks
- you have a court order or writ allowing you to change the locks or
- you believe that the tenant has abandoned the premises.

If the tenant is not paying rent, there are other ways to deal with the issue, including serving a notice of termination for non-payment of rent.

TENANT CHANGES THE LOCKS

The tenant cannot change the locks without your agreement. If you allow it, they must give you a key as soon as they install the new lock.

Tip: It is an offence under the *RTA* if your tenant does not give you a new key(s) after changing the locks.

Landlord Entry

Under the *RTA*, you must allow tenants to enjoy the premises peacefully. This means you cannot disturb tenants or let others (such as someone acting on your behalf, like a property manager) disturb them. The *RTA* has rules about when and why you can enter the rental unit.

You can enter **without notice** if:

- the tenant consents (agrees) to the entry
- there is an emergency, such as a water pipe bursting
- the tenant abandoned the premises

You can enter without the tenant's consent if you give them 24-hour written notice. You can only enter between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. and not on a holiday or your day of worship (usually Sunday unless the tenant informs you in writing that it's on a different day).

You can enter **with notice** for the following reasons:

- to inspect the property
- to make repairs or control pests
- to show the property to potential buyers or for mortgage inspections
- to show the property to potential renters if the tenancy is ending

If you need someone else to enter the unit for any of the above reasons, you can pass the right of entry to that person. For example, if you hire a repair person or realtor to show the unit. However, they must follow the same landlord entry rules under the *RTA*.

Tip: It is an offence under the *RTA* to not give proper notice of entry.

Crime Prevention

TENANT INSTALLS SECURITY DEVICES

The tenant does not need your permission to install security devices that can only be used from inside the property. For example, using cut pieces of wood to help prevent balcony door openings or installing a chain lock on the door. If the tenant installs a security device, then the device must:

- be capable of being installed or removed without damaging the unit (for example, pieces of wood should not damage the unit) or
- stay behind when the tenant leaves and becomes your property (for example, a chain lock usually stays behind because removing it may damage the unit).

CRIME FREE HOUSING PROGRAMS

Depending on where you live, crime-free housing programs may be available. These programs aim to reduce crime in rental properties and increase tenant safety. These programs often involve a partnership between law enforcement and the community. Landlords and property managers receive training on preventing illegal activities.

For more information, refer to the City of Edmonton's [Crime Free Multi-Housing program](#).

Repairs

The *RTA* does not specify who is responsible for repairs, but you should specify this in the lease. That way, you and your tenant can avoid confusion about repairs later.

Generally, you are responsible for:

- ensuring that the unit is move-in ready
- ensuring that the rental unit meets health and housing standards under the *Public Health Act*
- responding to repair requests
- following any lease terms about repairs

Generally, the tenant is responsible for:

- keeping the rental unit clean
- informing the landlord about needed repairs
- not doing or allowing damage to the unit or common property
- following any lease terms about repairs

Safety Codes and Standards

You must make sure your buildings and rental units are safe. There are rules about building design, construction, change, and renovation, as well as safety rules for electrical and plumbing.

In Alberta, the *Safety Codes Act* covers different parts of building safety. The **Safety Codes Council** is responsible for the laws and regulations related to safety codes. For example, there are codes for building, fire, electrical, gas, plumbing, private sewage treatment, boilers and pressure vessels, and elevators. Safety Code Officers inspect buildings and issue permits.

Landlords must also follow *Minimum Housing and Health Standards* to ensure that their properties are safe for occupants to live in. For more information, refer to CPLEA's publication **Minimum Housing and Health Standards**.

Federal laws may also affect the work you plan to do on your building.

For more information, contact Municipal Affairs Safety Services at 1-866-421-6929 (www.municipalaffairs.alberta.ca).

Protection of Privacy

Landlords must follow Alberta's *Personal Information Protection Act* in collecting, using, and disclosing tenants' personal information. Personal information is identifiable information such as:

- name, address and phone number (if it is unavailable in a public directory)
- business address, number and other contact information
- identification numbers
- credit card numbers and
- financial status and history, including the amount of rent the tenant pays

For more information, refer to the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Alberta (OIPC)'s **Landlords and Tenants: Guidance on PIPA**.

Website: oipc.ab.ca

Telephone: 1-888-878-4044

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