



April 3, 2020

Update # 13
Guidance for Responding to Maintenance Requests
During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Friends:

Given the health concerns surrounding the coronavirus, we wanted to give you some guidance on handling maintenance issues on your property. This general guidance seeks to answer questions that may arise when a tenant makes a service request. **The following does not contemplate every issue that may arise, nor does it purport to offer medical advice. If you are seeking medical advice, please consult the Center for Disease Control (“CDC”)'s website or your local health department.**

- **During this time, maintenance employees should only respond to emergency service calls.**

Due to the highly infectious nature of the coronavirus, and in an effort to protect other tenants in your building and your employees, you should advise your tenants that the maintenance department will only be responding to emergency maintenance requests. Emergency maintenance requests are those that would affect the health and/or safety of the person or property. Below are a few examples of what may be considered emergency requests:

- No electricity or water in the unit
- No heat in the unit
- Broken locks where tenant cannot enter/exit or properly secure the unit
- Sewage back-up
- Major water leaks

* While air conditioning is not listed as essential, your tenants will begin to vehemently disagree as temperatures rise. We suggest all properties begin making plans on how to safely respond to air conditioning service requests.

- **How should maintenance respond to an emergency service request?**

Management and staff should operate under the presumption that the tenant has or could have COVID-19. In responding to any service request, your maintenance employees should take precautions to avoid potentially contracting or transmitting the virus. Prior to sending an employee into a tenant's home, you should confirm that the tenant has no signs or symptoms associated with the coronavirus. A form has been available on our website for a couple of weeks that you may use for this purpose. If the tenant has not displayed any symptoms associated with the virus, encourage the maintenance employee to follow the CDC's guidelines for preventing transmission. For

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example, the employee should avoid close contact (within 6 feet) with the tenant if possible; employees should wash their hands often, especially after fulfilling a request; and employees should refrain from touching their faces. Further, consider making nitrile gloves and hand sanitizer readily available for these employees. The CDC also recommends good airflow, so encourage maintenance employees to leave the door open in a tenant's dwelling, if possible.

- **What if a tenant submits an emergency maintenance request and has tested positive for the coronavirus, or is displaying symptoms associated with the coronavirus?**

If the tenant or anyone residing in the home has tested positive for coronavirus, the CDC recommends that you contact your local health department for advice on how to proceed. According to the CDC's website, individuals who have a confirmed case of coronavirus should be home-isolated or quarantined. Nevertheless, the emergent maintenance issue must be handled. If you do not have maintenance employees trained in the use of PPE or do not have PPE available for employees, the best course of action is to hire a professional service whose staff is trained and equipped to respond to the request safely.

- **What if the maintenance employee discovers that a tenant or another person living in the home displays the symptoms associated with coronavirus?**

If a tenant or another person in the home is displaying symptoms associated with coronavirus, you should advise your employee to leave the tenant's home to comply with the CDC's recommendation that the individual be home-isolated or quarantined. The employee should notify management that the service call was not completed because someone in the unit displayed symptoms associated with coronavirus. Consult with your local health department for additional guidance.

- **Other Considerations**

- While working inside a tenant's home, maintenance employees should avoid touching surfaces in the dwelling as much as possible.
- Encourage the tenant and the employee to maintain their distance from one another according to the CDC's social distancing guidelines and, if possible, avoid each other altogether. Unless it is absolutely necessary, encourage the tenant and others in the dwelling to isolate themselves in another room. One way to accomplish this is, prior to fulfilling maintenance service requests, get as much information regarding the request as possible to pass along to your maintenance employee, in order to avoid contact between the employee and the tenant and to reduce the amount of time the employee spends in the tenant's home.
- Consider providing the tenant with a disinfectant to clean the surfaces and areas around where the maintenance will be performed. Alternatively, consider providing the employee with a disinfectant so he or she may clean the area around where the maintenance will be performed.
- If an employee is sick, tell him or her to stay home.

Again, this list is not intended to be exhaustive and **is not intended to offer any medical advice**, but is provided as a guide when determining how best to protect your employees and tenants. You should continue to encourage your tenants and employees to adhere to CDC's guidelines for preventing the transmission of the virus.

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For further guidance on responding to maintenance requests, please see guidance issued by the Federal Housing Administration and the National Apartment Association as well as links from other states and organizations that are listed below. If you have any questions regarding controlling transmission and preventing further spread of the virus, please consult the CDC's website, the Tennessee Department of Health's website, and your local health department.

Sources:

<https://www.uchealth.org/today/how-workers-can-stay-safe-from-coronavirus-in-other-peoples-homes/>

<https://www.dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/diseases-and-conditions/diseases-a-z-list/coronavirus/preventing-spread-communities/hotels>

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavirus%2F2019-ncov%2Fspecific-groups%2Fguidance-business-response.html

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>

<https://www.apartmentguide.com/blog/coronavirus-in-your-apartment/>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/workplace-school-and-home-guidance.pdf>

<https://www.tn.gov/health/cedep/ncov.html>

<https://www.knoxcounty.org/health/>

<https://www.osha.gov/>

https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/Housing/documents/HUD_Multifamily_Corona_QA_FINAL.pdf

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact our office. As a reminder, you may also check our website at painetarwater.com/landlord_portal for updates.

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Sincerely,

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