



Tenant Resource Guide

“What can I do if there is a problem with the property I am renting?”

If at any time during your tenancy the landlord fails to maintain your rental to safe and acceptable standards, or breaches your rental agreement, you can send a written notice to your landlord or the rental company that collects rent. A full list of duties is listed under [RCW 59.18.060](#).

Make sure to review your written rental/lease agreement. If you do not have a copy of your written rental agreement you are entitled to one and may request one free replacement copy during the tenancy. ([RCW 59.19.065](#))

Step 1: Provide a **written notice** to your Landlord. Your written notice **MUST** include the following information:

ADDRESS WHERE YOU LIVE (INCLUDE UNIT NUMBER)	PROPERTY OWNER NAME	WHAT IS DEFECTIVE IN YOUR HOME
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The following is a list of examples and time frames that a landlord or rental company has to remedy your request:

Defects or Repairs Needed	Time Frame
No hot or cold water, heat or electricity	24 Hours to Repair
No refrigerator, range, oven or other appliance supplied by the landlord	72 Hours to Repair
All other cases unless delayed for reasons beyond the control of landlord. If delayed, landlord must fix as soon as possible.	10 Days to Repair

Step 2: In accordance with [RCW 59.18.090](#), if the above time limits have expired and the repairs have not been completed then you may do one of the following;

Option 1	Contract with a licensed professional to fix the defect and submit the cost to the landlord. The cost will be deducted from your next rent payment. Total rent deducted for any repairs cannot exceed 2 months’ rent in any given year.
Option 2	Email the City of Lakewood at permits@cityoflakewood.us and they will inspect the property within 5 days. The landlord will be given 24 hours’ notice and has no power to prohibit city inspector entry.
Option 3	Terminate your rental agreement and leave the premises upon written notice to landlord. You will not be required to pay rent beyond the day written notice is received and you are entitled to a pro-rated refund for the current month and your housing deposit. The landlord must provide detailed statement for any reason housing deposit was withheld.

“My landlord will not return my security deposit. What should I do?”

If your landlord is refusing to return a security deposit, small claims court might be your best option. Before heading to court to file a suit, review your lease to verify no violations existed. Your landlord should specify a problem, such as carpet staining, wall damage or not fulfilling the lease term when withholding your funds. Write your landlord a letter demanding the money back, and specify why you dispute the findings. If the money is not returned, visit your local small claims court and file suit. A lawyer is not necessary.

Following is a list of organizations providing assistance with tenant landlord questions and eviction resolution.

Washington State Legislature <http://leg.wa.gov/>

This site has the complete Revised Code of Washington including [RCW 59.18](#); the Residential Landlord-Tenant Act.

Northwest Justice Project www.nwjustice.org

A publicly funded statewide legal aid program for low income persons & groups in Washington providing free legal information, advice, outreach and other community based advocacy.

Clear www.nwjustice.org/clear-hotline

Northwest Justice Project’s toll-free hotline which offers legal education, advice and referral information for tenant related housing issues. **1-888-201-1014**

Tacoma-Pierce County Volunteer Legal Services www.tacomaprobono.org

A volunteer legal services program that providing help with any legal problem related to foreclosure, including landlord-tenant problems.

Dispute Resolution Center www.CenterForResolution.org
Center for Dialog and Resolution
253-572-3657
solveit@CenterForResolution.org

Rental Assistance Information piercecountywa.gov/7142/rental-assistance
[Pierce County Housing Help](#)

Find a Lawyer
(253) 572-5134