

**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA MUNICIPAL REGULATIONS
TITLE 14 HOUSING**

CHAPTER 1 ADMINISTRATION AND ENFORCEMENT

SECTION 101. CIVIL ENFORCEMENT POLICY

101.1 The maintenance of leased or rental habitations in violation of the provisions of this subtitle, where those violations constitute a danger to the health, welfare, or safety of the occupants, is declared to be a public nuisance.

101.2 The abatement of the public nuisances referred to in §101.1 by criminal prosecution or by compulsory repair, condemnation, and demolition alone has been and continues to be inadequate.

101.3 The public nuisances referred to in §101.1 additionally cause specific, immediate, irreparable and continuing harm to the occupants of these habitations.

101.4 The public nuisances referred to in §101.1 damage the quality of life and the mental development and well-being of the occupants, as well as their physical health and personal property, and this harm cannot be fully compensated for by an action for damages, recession or equitable set-off for the reduction in rental values of the Premises.

101.5 It is the purpose of this section to declare expressly a public policy in favor of speedy abatement of the public nuisances referred to in §101.1, if necessary, by preliminary and permanent injunction issued by Courts of competent jurisdiction.

SECTION 106. NOTIFICATION OF TENANTS CONCERNING VIOLATIONS

106.1 After an inspection of a habitation, the Director shall provide the tenant of the habitation a copy of any notification with respect to that habitation issued to the owner pursuant to this subtitle.

106.2 The notification to the tenant shall state plainly and conspicuously that it is only for the tenant's information; provided, that if the notice places duties on the tenant, it shall state those duties.

106.3 In any instance where a violation of this subtitle directly involves more than one habitation, the Director shall post a copy of any notification issued to the owner pursuant to this chapter for a reasonable time in one or more locations within the building or buildings in which the deficiency exists. The locations for posting the notification shall be reasonably selected to give notice to all tenants affected.

106.4 No person shall alter, modify, destroy, or otherwise tamper with or mutilate a notification posted under this section.

106.5 Any tenant directly affected by the violation(s) shall, upon request to the Director, be sent a copy of the posted notification.

106.6 This section shall not be subject to any notice requirement of this subtitle.

CHAPTER 3 LANDLORD AND TENANT

SECTION 300. NOTICE TO TENANTS OF HOUSING CODE PROVISIONS

300.1 The owner of each habitation shall provide to each existing tenant, and shall at the commencement of any tenancy provide to the tenant, a copy of the provisions of this chapter and a copy of the following sections of Chapter 1 of this subtitle:

- (a) Chapter 1, §101 (Civil Enforcement Policy)
- (b) Chapter 1, §106 (Notification of Tenants Concerning Violations)

SECTION 301. IMPLIED WARRANTY AND OTHER REMEDIES

301.1 There shall be deemed to be included in the terms of any lease or rental agreement covering a habitation an implied warranty that the owner will maintain the Premises in compliance with this subtitle.

301.2 The rights, remedies, and duties set forth in this chapter shall not be deemed to be exclusive of one another unless expressly so declared or to preclude a court of law from determining that practices, acts, lease provisions and other matters not specifically dealt with in this chapter are contrary to public policy or are unconscionable or otherwise unlawful.

SECTION 302. VOIDING LEASE FOR VIOLATION OF REGULATIONS

302.1 The leasing of any habitation which, at the beginning of the tenancy, is unsafe or unsanitary due to violations of this subtitle in that habitation or in the common space of the Premises (whether or not those violations are the subject of a notice issued under this subtitle) of which the owner has knowledge or reasonably should have knowledge, shall render void the lease or rental agreement for the habitation.

302.2 After the beginning of the tenancy, if the habitation becomes unsafe or unsanitary due to the violations of this subtitle in that habitation or in the common space of the Premises (whether or not the violations are the subject of a notice issued under this subtitle), the lease or rental agreement for the habitation shall be rendered void if both of the following apply:

- (a) The violations did not result from the intentional acts or negligence of the tenant or his or her invitee; and
- (b) The violations are not corrected within the time allowed for corrections under a notice issued under this subtitle (or, if a notice has not been issued, within a reasonable time after the owner has knowledge or reasonably should have knowledge of the violations).

SECTION 303. SIGNED COPIES OF AGREEMENTS AND APPLICATIONS

303.1 In each lease or rental of a habitation entered into after June 12, 1970, the owner shall provide to the tenant upon execution (or within seven (7) days after execution) an exact, legible, completed copy of any agreement or application which the tenant has signed.

303.2 This section shall not be subject to any notice requirement of this subtitle.

SECTION 304. PROHIBITED WAIVER CLAUSES IN LEASE AGREEMENTS

304.1 Any provision of any lease or agreement contrary to, or providing for a waiver of the terms of this chapter, or §101 or §106 of chapter 1, shall be void and unenforceable.

304.2 No person shall cause any of the provisions prohibited by this section to be included in a lease or agreement respecting the use of the property in the District of Columbia, or demand that any person sign a lease or agreement containing any such provision.

304.3 No owner shall cause to be placed in a lease or rental agreement any provision exempting the owner or Premises from liability or limiting the liability of the owner or the residential Premises from damages for injuries to persons or property caused by or resulting from the negligence of the owner (or the owner's agents, servants, or employees) in the operation, care, or maintenance of the leased Premises, or any facility upon or portion of the property of which the leased premises are a part.

304.4 No owner shall place (or cause to be placed) in a lease or rental agreement a provision waiving the right of a tenant of residential Premises to a jury trial, or requiring that the tenant pay the owner's court costs or legal fees, or authorizing a person other than the tenant to confess judgment against a tenant. This subsection shall not preclude a court from assessing court or legal fees against a tenant in appropriate circumstances.

304.5 The provisions of this section shall not be subject to any notice requirement of this subtitle.

SECTION 305. INSPECTION OF PREMISES AFTER BREACH OF WARRANTY OR VOIDED LEASE

305.1 Following a judicial determination that the owner has breached the implied warranty of habitability applying to the Premises (under §301 of this chapter), or following a judicial determination that a lease or rental agreement is void, the owner shall obtain a certificate from the Director that the habitation is in compliance with this subtitle prior to the next reletting of the habitation.

SECTION 306. WRITTEN RECEIPTS FOR PAYMENTS BY TENANT

306.1 In each lease or rental of a habitation, the owner shall provide written receipts for all monies paid to him or her by the tenant as rent, security, or otherwise, unless the payment is made by personal check.

306.2 Each receipt issued under this section shall state the following:

- (a) The exact amount received;
- (b) The date monies are received; and
- (c) The purpose of the payment.

306.3 Each receipt shall also state any amounts still due which are attributable to late charges, court costs, or any other such charge in excess of rent.

306.4 If payment is made by personal check, and there is a balance still due which is attributable to late charges, court costs, or any other such charge in excess of rent, the owner shall provide a receipt stating the nature of the charges and the amount due.

306.5 The provisions of this section shall not be subject to any notice requirements of this subtitle.

SECTION 307. PROHIBITION OF RETALIATORY ACTS AGAINST TENANTS

307.1 No action or proceeding to recover possession of a habitation may be brought against a tenant, nor shall an owner otherwise cause a tenant to quit a habitation involuntarily, in retaliation for any of the tenant's actions listed in §307.3.

307.2 No demand for an increase in rent from the tenant, nor decrease in the services to which the tenant has been entitled, nor increase in the obligations of a tenant shall be made in retaliation against a tenant for any of the tenant's actions listed in §307.3.

307.3 This section prohibits the taking of any of the actions set forth in this section in retaliation against the tenant for any of the following actions by a tenant:

- (a) A good faith complaint or report concerning housing deficiencies made to the owner or a governmental authority, directly by the tenant or through a tenant organization;
- (b) The good faith organization of a tenant organization or membership in a tenant organization;
- (c) The good faith assertion of rights under this subtitle, including rights under §301 and §302 of this chapter, or §101 of chapter 1 of this subtitle.

SECTION 308. SECURITY DEPOSITS

308.1 For the purpose of this chapter, the term "security deposit" shall mean all monies paid to the owner by the tenant as a deposit or other payment made as security for performance of the tenant's obligations in a lease or rental of the property.

308.2 On or after February 20, 1976, any security deposit or other payment required by an owner as security for performance of the tenant's obligations in a lease or rental of a dwelling unit shall not exceed an amount equivalent to the first month's rent charged that tenant for the dwelling unit, and shall be charged only once by the owner to the tenant.

308.3 All monies paid to an owner by tenants for security deposits or other payment made as security for performance of the tenant's obligations shall be deposited by the owner in an interest bearing escrow account established and held in trust in a financial institution in the District, insured by a federal or state agency, for the sole purpose of holding such deposits or payments.

308.4 All monies held by a owner on February 20, 1976 for security deposits or other payments covered by this section shall be paid into an escrow account within thirty (30) days.

308.5 The owner of more than one residential building may establish one (1) escrow account for holding security deposits or other payments by the tenants of those buildings.

308.6 For each security deposit or other payment covered by this section, the owner shall clearly state in the lease or agreement or on the receipt for the deposit or other payment the terms and conditions under which the payment was made.

308.7 The provisions of this section shall not be applicable to Federal or District of Columbia agencies' dwelling units leased in the District of Columbia or to units for which rents are Federally subsidized.

SECTION 309. REPAYMENT OF SECURITY DEPOSITS TO TENANTS

309.1 Within forty-five (45) days after the termination of the tenancy, the owner shall do one of the following:

- (a) Tender payment to the tenant, without demand, of any security deposit and any similar payment paid by the tenant as a condition of tenancy in addition to the stipulated rent, and any interest due the tenant on that deposit or payment as provided in §311; or
- (b) Notify the tenant in writing, to be delivered to the tenant personally or by certified mail at the tenant's last known address, of the owner's intention to withhold and apply the monies toward defraying the cost of expenses properly incurred under the terms and conditions of the security deposit agreement.

309.2 The owner, within thirty (30) days after notification to the tenant pursuant to the requirement of §309.1(b), shall tender a refund of the balance of the deposit or payment, including interest, not used to defray such expenses, and at the same time give the tenant an itemized statement of the repairs and other uses to which the monies were applied and the cost of each repair or other use.

309.3 Failure by the owner to comply with §309.1 and §309.2 of this section shall constitute *prima facie* evidence that the tenant is entitled to full return, including interest as provided in §311, of any deposit or other payment made by the tenant as security for performance of his or her obligations or as a condition of tenancy, in addition to the stipulated rent.

309.4 Failure by the owner to serve the tenant personally or by certified mail, after good faith effort to do so, shall not constitute a failure by the owner to comply with §309.1 and §309.2 of this section.

SECTION 310. RETURN OF SECURITY DEPOSIT: INSPECTIONS OF PREMISES

310.1 In order to determine the amount of the security deposit or other payment to be returned to tenant, the owner may inspect the dwelling unit within three (3) days, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays, before or after termination of the tenancy.

310.2 The owner shall conduct the inspection, if the inspection is to be conducted, at the time and place of which notice is given to the tenant.

310.3 The owner shall notify the tenant in writing of the time and date of the inspection.

310.4 The notice of inspection shall be delivered to the tenant, or at the dwelling unit in question, at least ten (10) days before the date of the intended inspection.

SECTION 311. INTEREST ON SECURITY DEPOSIT ESCROW ACCOUNTS

311.1 The interest in the escrow account described in §309 on all money paid by the tenant prior to or during the tenancy as a security deposit, decorating fee, or similar deposit or fee, shall commence on the date the money is actually paid by the tenant, or within thirty (30) days after February 20, 1976, whichever is later, and shall accrue at the passbook rate, then prevailing on January 1 and on July 1 for each six month period (or part thereof) of the tenancy which follows those dates. On those dates, the passbook rate in the District of Columbia financial institution in which the escrow account is held shall be used.

[Note: On and after March 17, 1993, the phrase “a rate not less than five percent (5%) per annum simple interest” in the above Section 311.1 was deleted and the following was inserted in its place:

“The passbook rate, then prevailing on January 1, and on July 1 for each six month period (or part thereof) of the tenancy which follows those dates. On those dates, the passbook rate in the District of Columbia financial institution in which the escrow account is held shall be used.”]

311.2 Interest on an escrow account shall be due and payable by the owner to the tenant upon termination of any tenancy of a duration of twelve (12) months or more, unless an amount is deducted under procedures set forth in §309.

311.3 Except in cases where no interest is paid to the tenant as provided in §311.2, no interest or other consideration shall inure to the benefit of the owner by reason of the owner’s control over the escrow account nor shall said account be assigned or used as security for loans.

311.4 It is the intent of this section that the account referred to in this section and §309 shall be used solely for the purpose of securing the lessees’ performance under the lease.

311.5 This section and §309 and §310 shall not be subject to the notice requirements of any other section of this subtitle.

311.6 The housing provider shall post in the lobby of the building and rental office at the end of each calendar year, the following information: where the tenants’ security deposits are held and what the prevailing rate was for each six month period over the past year. At the end of a tenant’s tenancy, the housing provider shall list for the tenant the interest rate for each six month period during the tenancy.

311.7 Prior to the acceptance of a nonrefundable application fee or security deposit, the owner of the habitation shall provide written notice of any requests that are pending for an adjustment in the rent ceiling of the habitation, as the adjustments are specifically enumerated in Section 207 of the Rental Housing Act of 1985 (D.C. Law 6-10; D.C. Code §45-2517)

311.8 The notification shall include the current rent ceiling, the new rent ceiling requested in the petition, the petition filing date and petition number, and the nature of any repairs or rehabilitation planned in the dwelling unit as part of the petition.

311.9 A violation of this section [Section 311.7 and 311.8] shall be a Class 2 civil infraction pursuant to titles I-III of the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs Civil Infractions Act of 1985. Adjudication of any infraction of this article shall be pursuant to titles I-III of the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs Civil Infractions Act of 1985.

SECTION 399. DEFINITIONS

399.1 The provisions of §199 of chapter 1 of this title and the definitions set forth in that section shall be applicable to this chapter.

The following sections were added by the Unitary Rent Ceiling Adjustment Amendment Act of 1992, D.C. Law 9-191:

“Sec. 3. Article 290 of the Housing Regulations of the District of Columbia, effective August 11, 1955 (C.O. 55-1503; 14 DCMR Chapter 3), is amended by adding new subsections 2908.6 and 2908.7 to read as follows:

“2908.6 Any housing provider violating the provisions of these rules by failing to return a security deposit rightfully owed to a tenant in accordance with the requirements of this article shall be liable for the amount of the deposit withheld, or in the event of bad faith, for treble that amount.”

“2908.7 For the purposes of subsection 2908.6, the term “bad faith” means any frivolous or unfounded refusal to return a security deposit, as required by law, that is motivated by a fraudulent deceptive, misleading, dishonest, or unreasonably self-serving purpose and not by simple negligence, bad judgement, or any honest belief in the course of action taken.”

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