



Housing Complaints

We are often asked to visit and assess possible sub-standard housing conditions. Most complaints are about rental housing so this pamphlet will provide both landlords and tenants with a guide to some basic standards for rental housing on the reverse side.

What to do if you feel your rental home is substandard

No matter how minor or serious your concerns regarding your dwelling may be, initially you must inform your landlord. You need put your concerns in writing and request they reply providing details of their intended action.

Contact us if:

- Your house meets the definition of dangerous or insanitary and you are unhappy with your landlord's action or response
- You are unsure whether or not your dwelling meets the dangerous or insanitary definition

The Residential Tenancies Act 1986

The Residential Tenancies Act 1986 outlines the landlord's responsibility to provide their premises in a reasonable state of cleanliness and to maintain it in a reasonable state of repair. It also places some responsibility on tenants to keep the premises reasonably clean and tidy and to notify the landlord as soon as possible of any damage or need for any repairs.

Every tenant should know their rights and obligations under the Residential Tenancies Act 1986 and the role of Tenancy Services in landlord / tenant relationships and disputes.

The DCC's role

We can only assist with housing complaints where the property in question is either dangerous or insanitary. The definitions for these two terms are outlined in the Building Act 2004 and included below. All other complaints should be addressed to your landlord and Tenancy Services.

We do not get involved in disputes over lease agreements or

rental prices. If you have concerns about these matters, you should contact Tenancy Services on 0800 836262 or their website www.dbh.govt.nz.

Dangerous

Likely to cause injury or death (whether by collapse or otherwise) to any persons in it or to persons on other property or damage to any other property.

Insanitary

So situated or of such construction or in such a state of disrepair as to be offensive or likely to be injurious to health; or its provisions against moisture penetration are so insufficient or in such a defective condition as to cause dampness in the building or in any adjoining building; or it is without a supply of potable water adequate for its intended use; or it has inadequate sanitary facilities for its intended use.

Basic standards for rental housing

Before you sign a rental agreement, use the following guidelines to check that the house is suitable for habitation. These are a guide only and may not be enforceable under current legislation.

All rooms

- All rooms should be as free as possible from dampness
- Each room should have adequate ventilation and artificial lighting
- All walls and ceilings should be adequately lined and finished and easily cleaned
- Every room should be adequately floored with a washable and durable surface and kept in a good state of repair, free from crevices, holes and depressions
- All fittings and any supplied appliances should be kept in a good state of repair
- Electricity and gas supplies must be adequate and safe against fire or injury
- Each room should be moisture resistant, from outside or other tenancies.
- A fire escape and safeguards against the outbreak of fire should be provided

Kitchen

The kitchen should have:

- Space and facilities for the hygienic storage, preparation and cooking of food
- A utensil-washing sink with taps connected to an adequate supply of potable water

Living areas and bedrooms

- A fireplace and chimney, or an energy source for a heating appliance should be provided

Toilet and bathroom

- The toilet should be installed in a sanitary manner
- They should allow for privacy, effective cleaning and should discharge into a plumbing and drainage system
- A bath or shower with an adequate supply of wholesome water should be provided along with an adequate means of heating the water

Laundry

- Facilities and space should be available for laundry equipment. If the landlord supplies these appliances they should be adequately maintained
- An energy source, hot and cold running water and adequate drainage should be provided

External

- The house should be constructed of sound, durable, weatherproof materials and maintained in good condition
- Every house should be provided with adequate and efficient drainage to remove storm water, surface water and ground water
- Wherever there is timber floor, there should be adequate space and vents underneath to ensure proper ventilation for the protection of the floor from damp and decay

Condensation and mildew

Condensation and subsequent mildew growth can be caused by construction faults but is more commonly caused by moisture generated within the house, such as from cooking, showering, or failure to ventilate. The average adult releases 1/2 litre of water per day just by breathing, so it is important to keep all rooms well ventilated.

For more information, please see our 'Controlling condensation and mildew' pamphlet.