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OCTOBER MEETING

Tuesday, Oct. 18, at 7 P.M.

Regulating Landlords

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Cost: Free for members \$15 non-members

Letter from the President:

This month's meeting will be an open forum discussion of the various forms of regulations imposed on rental housing providers. These laws include registration, licensing, inspections, crime-free housing, and chronic nuisance laws. Most of these laws that we see from around the state are structured to hold the landlord liable for the behavior of our tenants.

It is the position of RAA that our members provide housing and our responsibility is primarily the quality of the property we manage not on controlling the behavior of citizens who happen to be renters. That is the duty of government.

A landlord who has screened prospective tenants has done what is possible to prevent our property from being occupied by bad neighbors. Often situations change and stable households turn bad. Sometimes, a property manager makes an error in judgment, offering housing to someone who turns out different from what was expected. It is in our best interest to correct those situations.

Our goal this month is to reach a consensus among our members on how a law could be structured that encourages responsible business practices and gives property owners the tools they need to effectively resolve problem situations. All parties—landlord, tenant and government—need to be accountable to honor their responsibilities.

Investment in this community needs to be secure. We want any eventual regulation which the City of Rockford adopts to encourage existing investors to do more and invite new people to also invest in the City of Rockford. Your experience provides a unique perspective and your opinions are valuable. I hope you can all attend and be part of this important discussion.

The following is taken from a summary of revisions to the EPA RRP rule by Joy Finch of Greenville Technical College in SC. These revisions will apply to many exterior painting projects in Rockford.

EPA RRP Revisions

by Joy Finch

EPA is promulgating a requirement that vertical containment or equivalent extra precautions in containing the work area be used on exterior renovations performed within 10 feet of the property line. This requirement is intended to provide flexibility for certified renovators to design effective containment systems based on the renovation activity and the work site. To ensure that renovation firms understand that the requirement refers to a wide variety of effective work area containment systems, EPA is including the phrase "or equivalent extra precautions in containing the work area" in this requirement. Effective work area containment can span a range from simple barriers to more extensive scaffolding, depending on the size of the job and other relevant factors. Complex vertical containment systems with extensive scaffolding are often not necessary to effectively contain the dust generated by a renovation. An example of a simple barrier system, on a job requiring hand scraping within a few feet of the ground and within a few feet of the property line, would be laying plastic or other impermeable material on the ground between the paint disturbing activity and the property line, anchoring it to the house, and then extending the material up and over the fence at the property line. A slightly more extensive containment approach could involve the use of a triangular eave/soffit "lean-to" system. In this system, plastic or other impermeable material could be spread out on the ground 5–10 feet out from the exterior side wall, depending upon the available space. The same impermeable material could be attached to the eave or soffit area at the roofline, and held away from the building by an extension ladder temporarily fastened to where the wall meets the eave or soffit. The material would then be fastened and sealed onto the ground cover. A variation of this system would involve draping the plastic or impermeable material over a frame consisting of commercially available tension rods or strong painter's extension tubes. Effective containment could also consist of plastic or other impermeable material draped from outriggers, or framework secured to the roofline, taped to the sides of the building to surround the work area, and fastened and sealed to the ground cover. Yet another containment system could involve a rigid box-like framework, constructed out of commercially available tension rods or painter's extension tubes, wrapped in impermeable

sheeting and anchored to the ground cover and the sides of the building. EPA believes that these measures, in most cases, should be sufficient to contain dust and debris where extra containment measures are needed, such as work that creates large amounts of dust or work performed within 10 feet of the property line.

... EPA has been asked to address the problem of obstacles that prevent renovation firms from using 6 feet of plastic sheeting or other impermeable material on interior floors or 10 feet of material on the ground. EPA believes that the proper use of vertical containment measures may be a more effective method for containing the work area than use of traditional floor or ground containment alone, especially where obstacles prevent or make it impractical to install floor or ground containment to the extent required by the RRP rule. Therefore, EPA is amending the containment provisions for both interior and exterior renovations to permit renovation firms to erect vertical containment closer to the renovation activity than the minimum floor or ground containment distance specified in the RRP rule to give renovation firms more flexibility in designing effective containment strategies for particular work sites. For exterior renovations, this amendment would allow a renovation firm to construct vertical containment less than 10 feet from the renovation activity. If a renovation firm chooses to take advantage of this provision, the ground containment may extend less than 10 feet, stopping just outside the edge of the vertical containment, as long as the distance is sufficient to contain all dust and debris during the renovation and post-renovation cleanup. For example, a renovation firm erects an exterior vertical containment system consisting of a rigid box-like framework wrapped in impermeable plastic sheeting and anchored to the ground and home. If this containment system is erected 5 feet from the side of the home, and placed on top of ground containment, such containment should effectively limit the travel of dust and debris to the interior of the enclosure. Under the amended containment provisions, the renovation firm would not be required to extend plastic sheeting or other impermeable material another 5 feet beyond the vertical containment system in order to meet the 10 foot minimum ground containment requirement promulgated in the 2008 RRP rule.

VALUE OF KEEPING CURRENT RESIDENTS

Recently, a southern California landlord went to one of his properties to pay his handy dudes and to see/inspect a bathroom remodel job at one of his 15 years+ tenant's 1 bedroom 1 bath apartment. The following represents his account of what happened when he stopped by the rental of one of his long-term residents, not long after having an operation and getting out of the hospital.

I knocked on the resident's door and she began scolding me for being out and about (God love her) went into the bathroom to look at the job. Discovered that we needed to do a parts run for 3-4 items. So I went and fetched the items. I brought them back to my guys and did quality control. After I handed them the parts and gave them instructions I went back out to the living room where (we will call her Sue) insisted I take a seat and rest a spell. I wanted to wait until the job was finished to the point that the tenant could take a shower and the bathroom was clean on all surfaces.

Every time I exit a tenant's home I say something like excuse me, sorry for the interruption. Every time I need to enter the dwelling I knock and I always close the door behind me. At one point Sue said "Oh you don't have to knock each time." My response was it's the right thing to do. "This isn't my home it's your home Sue." She playfully argued with me and we decided that "for tonight" it was "Our Apartment".

The point of this paragraph is that I always show respect to my tenants when I am in "their home." I make it clear that although I own the property, I realize and respect that it is their home.

Sue and I chatted for over an hour while the work was completed. I took the opportunity to not just get current with this tenant. I checked that all the info was correct, the phone number, etc. I got a good deep look at the dwelling's current condition. We made future plans for other work I want to do to this apartment. The end goal is to bring it up to freshly upgraded standard from the ceiling to the floors and all points in between.

After the work for the day was completed I took both tenants, Sue and her 23-year-old son into the bathroom. I showed them that everything was working correctly and what I was having done today, the following day, and Saturday. I showed them that by the end of the day, or before or after Saturday, the bathroom would be finished.

We installed a 36x12 window downsized from 36x36. We also installed a sterling tub and shower

caulkless surround.

We converted the 3-handle Moen tub and shower to a one-handle Moen. We replaced the wall that the toilet/sink and tub and shower were attached to and replaced all termite munched wall studs with pressure treated 2x4's. We sprayed for dry rot termites and installed new bathroom sub-floor complete. We also installed new sheet vinyl flooring and ran the sheet vinyl 2 inches up on all walls. A New 5 inch base board molding was added, new toto low flow toilet, and a new wall-hung sink. All new, brushed nickel hardware was added along with a new medicine cabinet. New lighting and complete a paint job was done as well. I used a curved tub/shower curtain rod, a shower curtain liner, and a new high quality fabric shower curtain. I had put that into another apartment at this property that this tenant spied and fell in love with.

As Sue and I walked to her front door she expressed how much she enjoyed the visit with me. I expressed that I felt the same. We talked about many things; at least 75% of our conversation was about her apartment and the property.

One of the keys of retaining long term tenants (15+ years and many more in the future, I predict, with Sue) is having a good Landlord/Tenant relationship. Upgrade the rental property with long term tenants and make the house as comfortable as possible. Fix any problems as quickly as they arise. The most important thing in this business if I had to pick is only one thing: Communication! If you keep a good, clear relationship of communication most of your problems will dissolve. None of that Cool Hand Luke junk: "What we have here, is a failure to communicate." If you have a communication failure no amount of consuming hard boiled eggs will fix it.

I made a promise to myself when I started in this business over 15 years ago. If I ever entered any of the properties with a constant, stressed-out frown, it's time to get out.

I don't plan to sell any of my properties in the foreseeable future. I'm a landlord for life I guess. LOL!

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We will donate to the Rockford Apartment Association, 10% of the cost of any AD, placed by an RAA member, in the Renter's Guide.

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RETAINING GOOD RESIDENTS

Good residents are easy to ignore-until they tell you they are moving out. Why are they leaving? Well, it might be because you ignored them. And when residents plan to move, it's very, very difficult to get them to change their minds.

The reason you may ignore good residents is that you spend so much time working on your not-so-good ones; cajoling them to clean up their acts or planning to evict them. When you are always on the phone with Average or Bad residents A, B, and C, you quickly start thinking of Good resident D as simply a check that comes every month, like clockwork. But your good residents are much more than that. They are human beings who:

- * Understand that they are paying good money, and expect good service in return;
- * Notice when their home seems to be going down;
- * Recognize when they are being treated disrespectfully or dismissively.

On the other hand, YOU may not recognize these feelings in your good residents, simply because they may be reluctant to share them. The complaints are more likely to come from your less desirable residents, and you may be more likely to dismiss them as a result.

The good residents are more likely to suffer in silence, before deciding to move on.

It's vitally important that you retain your good residents, not only because they make managing your property more pleasant, but because they are so hard to replace. Once that home is vacant, you may not rent it for months, and you have no idea how the next resident will turn out. He could be just bad enough to make your life really difficult, or so bad that he only lasts for a month or two before eviction.

Since your good residents are less likely to contact you, you have to stay in touch with them. Try to get a read on their feelings by calling or emailing at least once every 3 to 6 months. A few sample questions could include:

- * Does any one thing need to be repaired in the home?
- * Do you have one suggestion for us?
- * How are your neighbors?

It is suggested that you send a survey to your residents once a year. Not only will you learn how satisfied your good residents feel, you've made them feel important and wanted. Now you need to follow up by addressing their concerns, if any, sincerely and quickly. More resident retention tips to follow next month.



◀ *Staff of Just credit solutions standing next to RAA board member Rick Davis.*

Just Credit Solutions spoke at the September RAA meeting to educate members on methods to repair credit and sell homes to our tenants.

Dean Impee from Tri B Hardware. Tri B Hardware is an RAA vendor. ▼

Talking Real Estate
with Tim and Tim **WNTA**
1330 AM

Call in with your questions!

815-874-8255



News and Notes

✓ The Winnebago County Health Department, Center for Environmental Improvement will be awarded \$2,885,700 in Lead Hazard Reduction Demonstration grant program funds to evaluate 200 homes for lead paint and hazards, eliminate lead hazards in 200 homes; conduct outreach and education to reach at least 3600 people and provide training to 200 individuals. The Winnebago County Health Department will be partnering with Rockford Area Affordable Housing Coalition and Rockford Apartment Association in this program. Contact the Health Department for more information at 815-720-4110.

✓ The 2011 Lead Poisoning Prevention and Healthy Homes Conference is being held in Springfield, Illinois on October 27, 2011 from 9A.M.-3:30P.M. at the Dove Conference Center of the Prairie Heart Institute at St. John's Hospital located at 619 E. Mason Street.

✓ HB0141 NOW PUBLIC ACT 97-0021 Amends the Illinois Radon Awareness Act. Provides that if a lessee notifies a lessor that a radon test indicates the existence of a radon hazard in the leased dwelling unit, the lessor must disclose that risk to any prospective lessee of that unit, unless a subsequent test by the lessor indicates that a radon hazard does not exist in that unit. Further provides that if a test by the lessor indicates the existence of a radon hazard in a dwelling unit, then the lessor must notify current and prospective tenants of that unit. Provides that these requirements do not apply: (i) if the dwelling unit is located on the third or higher story of a building or (ii) if the lessor has undertaken mitigation activities and a subsequent test indicates that a radon hazard does not exist.

✓ Recently the Signal Hill Neighborhood Association requested RAA members who own property in the associations boundaries provide them contact information so landlords and tenants can be included in the distribution of information regarding the association's meetings and activities. There was good response from RAA members. Developing a positive relationship with the neighborhood where we own property is important to create trust and allow both sides to work together to solve problems. Rockford has active neighborhood associations in all areas of the city. I encourage all RAA members to reach out the the neighborhood associations where you own property and make sure they know who you are and that you are a member of RAA. You can find out if there is an association in your area by contacting Cyndie Hall, Executive Director, Neighborhood Network Phone: 815-967-4034 or email: cyndie.hall@rockfordil.gov

✓ Do you have a tenant or know someone who can no longer hear on the phone? They may qualify for a free phone or other telecommunications equipment from Illinois Telecommunications Access Corporation. To qualify a person must be an Illinois resident, have standard phone service in the home, and can no longer hear on the phone. For information on this program contact Jenniger Berg at RAMP. ph 815-968-7467 or by email at jberg@rampcil.org

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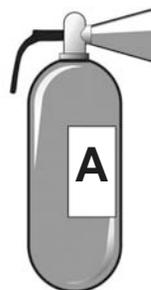
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*Legal Counsel (Board Advisor) Tom Wartowski 815 978-1572

Call us First!

The RAA board meets with the City of Rockford on a regular basis to discuss issues related to rental property. The subject of how the community and property owners can better communicate has been addressed. From our perspective, responsible property owners who receive a call about problems at their properties quickly address them and avoid the need for code enforcement. The city and community groups frequently complain that there is no simple way to know who to call.

In response, RAA has added a property contact directory to our web site. Please go to www.rockfordapartmentassociation.org. Click on the tab on the left of the screen that says "Property Contact Info." It will be available for anyone to use, not just RAA members. We believe that both owner occupants and investors will benefit from better communication when problems occur.

The directory associates a contact name with an address. If you don't manage your property personally then the name and number should be for your property manager. It will only search by property, not by your name. You set up an account that allows you to edit or delete your contact info as necessary. The goal is to encourage complaints to come to the owner before calls are made to the city which end up in code enforcement actions. In order for RAA to promote this we need members to participate. Please consider putting contact information for your properties in this directory.

If you have any problems using the directory report them to Paul Arena at ArenaCnst@charter.net.

Rockford Apartment Association Code of Ethics

We, the members of the RAA, recognizing our duty to the public and the intimate nature of the relationship between the apartment resident and the owner, or manager, and being aware of the vastly increasing role of the apartment industry in providing the home of the future, and in order to provide the apartment-residing public with the maximum in quality and service upon the highest standards of honest and integrity, do hereby bind ourselves, with each and every member, together and alone, agreeing that, so long as we remain members of the RAA and so long as nothing contained herein shall be unlawful, we shall:

1. Promote, employ and maintain a high standard of integrity in the performance of all rental obligations and services in the operation of our apartment communities.
2. Maintain and operate our apartment communities in accordance with fair and honorable standards of competition, ever mindful of the purposes of the Rockford Apartment Association and in compliance with the bylaws thereof.
3. Strive continually to promote the education and fraternity of the membership and to promote the progress and dignity of the apartment industry in creating a better image of itself in order that the public may be better served.
4. Seek to provide better values, so that an even greater share of the public may enjoy the many benefits of apartment living.
5. Establish high ethical standards of conduct within the apartment industry in the business relationship between the owner, managers and suppliers of products and services to the apartment industry.
6. Maintain property standards of the appropriate governmental authority.
7. Ensure that every qualified individual, regardless of that individual's race, color, religion, gender, disability, familial status or national origin is afforded the same opportunity to rent an apartment and enjoy the benefits of apartment living.

Financial statement available upon request to members in good standing. The content and opinions expressed in the RAA newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of, nor are they necessarily endorsed by, the Rockford Apartment Association or its board.



OCTOBER MEETING

Tuesday, Oct. 18, at 7 P.M.

Regulating Landlords: What it would mean to you!

Cost: Free for members \$15 non-members

Come to a meeting!

Join and save!

Free to RAA members

\$15 non-members

**Rockford Area
Association Of Realtors**

6776 East State Street

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RAA rental forms for members only

Forms are available at the following locations. Please call in advance to be sure someone will be available to help you.

RAA Meetings	6776 E. State St.	1-800-RAA-6676
Hurd Properties II LLC	124 Water Street Suite 204	1-815-519-5583
State Line Rentals	6952 Rote Rd. Rockford, IL	1-815-398-8886
Terra Creek Apartments	375 Bienterra Trail	1-815-397-3320

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