

# Housing Code Checklist

The R.I. Housing Maintenance and Occupancy Code (R.I.G.L. 45-24.3) requires the following to be provided and maintained in all rental units:

## Electric

- Wiring, receptacle outlets (to plug into), and fixtures must be properly installed and maintained in safe condition.
- All habitable rooms and kitchens must have at least two outlets.
- Bathrooms and kitchens must have at least one electric light fixture.
- All rooms and interior common areas must have adequate lighting systems and light switches.

## Plumbing

- All plumbing fixtures and facilities must be properly used and kept in a clean and sanitary condition.
- Kitchen sinks must be kept in good working condition and properly connected to adequate hot (120°) and cold water, and drainage systems. Bathrooms must have properly working flush toilets, and sinks with hot (120°) and cold water.
- Every rental unit must have a private room with a properly working bathtub or shower with hot (120°) and cold water.

## Heating

- Every dwelling must have properly installed and maintained heating facilities which can heat all habitable rooms and the bathrooms to at least 68° Fahrenheit (65° in Newport, 70° in Portsmouth and 67° in Providence), at a height of 18" above the floor, between October 1st and May 1st. Since the three aforementioned communities (and possibly others) have minimum temperature requirements which vary from the state housing code (or may allow lower nighttime temperatures), one should call the municipal housing code official for the specific minimum degrees allowed between particular hours.
- Unvented flame space heaters are prohibited (call local building or housing code official for further details).
- Heat and hot water bills are the landlord's responsibility unless otherwise agreed to in the lease and under control of tenant.

# Other Requirements

- All interior and exterior areas of residential buildings must be kept weathertight, watertight, damp free, in sound condition and in good repair.
- Lead base paint, or other hazardous materials must be removed if they present a health or safety hazard.
- All doors and windows must fit tightly, and must be provided with screens as well as storm doors and storm windows.\*
- Shades or blinds must be provided for bathroom and sleeping room windows.\*
- Bathrooms must be adequately ventilated and have easy to clean floors that don't soak up water.
- Kitchens must have cabinets and/or shelves for storage.
- Rubbish and garbage must be properly disposed of. Landlords must provide containers if there are four or more units.
- The landlord is responsible for insect or rodent extermination if two or more units in a dwelling are affected, otherwise the tenant must take care of it.
- Every habitable room must have at least one window that opens.
- Every dwelling unit above the first floor must have two exits leading to ground level.

Landlords are responsible for all major repairs on electrical, plumbing and heating facilities, as well as any appliances like stoves or refrigerators if part of the rental agreement. Tenants can only be made responsible for the repairs of electrical, plumbing and heating facilities if there is a written agreement made in "good faith", signed by both parties, and supported by adequate consideration.

\*The owner must initially provide and install screens, storm windows and shades for a new tenant. From then on, the tenant is responsible for their maintenance and replacement.

Taking rent for a residential unit obligates an owner to keep the unit up to minimum housing code standards and failure to do so may result in tenant action (as allowed under the new "Act") or action by the local housing code official to remedy the situation.

*Information from The Rhode Island Landlord-Tenant Handbook*