

Three Landlord Headaches to Avoid This Summer

By Michael Birov

Summer is here and soon your tenants will be cranking up the air conditioning units and taxing the in-house appliances. In order to keep things running smoothly at your complex, a maintenance check up may be in order.

1. Air Conditioning Headache

There is no bigger headache for an apartment owner than dealing with an air conditioning problem in the midst of a summer heat wave. We've all been there, the phone rings and your sweaty tenant is screaming about the broken air conditioning unit. They go on to explain that seeking relief from the 100 plus degree outdoor temperature they rushed inside to hit the switch on the air conditioner and nothing happened. Afterwards they opened all the windows and pulled out the fan from the closet and are now demanding we have the unit fixed ten minutes ago. We proceed to call every repairman in the AOA magazine only to find out that they are all working on the buildings down every street in the city. Finally, we get someone who'll come out in three days and we're happy it didn't take a week. Now we call the tenant back to give them the "good" news.

This is not a scenario anyone wants to repeat. Chances are that it may happen again someday, but planning ahead can increase your odds of avoidance dramatically. The most proven plan for package units, split systems and heat pumps is doing a routine maintenance twice a year. The service would usually include a unit cleaning, tune-up, filter change out, electrical system check up, and refrigerant test. The benefits will prolong the life of the a/c & heating system, save energy, freshen air quality and greatly reduce emergency calls during the summer (and winter for the heating system).

2. Appliances Headache

Maintenance of appliances is relatively easy. It starts with your tenants and you may want to consider sending out a short letter with helpful hints and reminders your tenants can follow:

- A. Do not to put metal plates and foil in the microwave
- B. Always clean grease and oil from the stove, oven and microwave
- C. Take out old food from and clean the refrigerator every three months
- D. Clean the dishwasher with cleaner twice a year

It is also important to ask an appliance specialist to perform preventative maintenance once a year. Here is a list to go over with your professional:

- 1. Clean fridge coils
- 2. Clean burners on the gas range/cool-top
- 3. Clean dishwasher drain line
- 4. Adjust burners, calibrate thermostats
- 5. Align washer/dryer level
- 6. Replace hook/microhood filters
- 7. Check for gas and carbon monoxide leaks
- 8. Clean lint filter on dryer
- 9. Check Freon level on refrigerator
- 10. Make sure all appliance components are operating properly

3. Vents/Ducts Headache

Get an HVAC specialist to check your vents and ducts. Simply let the professionals check the vents for air leaks. Try and save existing vents/ducts versus going with expensive replacements. This will save on energy costs. Depending on usage, once a year to every 18 month check-ups are adequate.

Remember, keeping your tenants happy is good for business. A little preventative maintenance will reduce tenant complaints and your unexpected repair costs.

The above article was written by Michael Birov of West Coast Chief Repair. For over 12 years, West Coast has specialized in Air Conditioning, Heating & Appliance Services. For an inspection of your apartment building or any questions please give them a call at (800) 810-7813.