

Letter to the Editor...

Nightmare With L.A. Systematic Code Enforcement



Dear Dan:

I am writing to you because I am really sick and tired of the Los Angeles Systematic Code Enforcement Program. As you know, I have been a licensed real estate broker for many years as well as an apartment owner. I try to maintain my properties as best as I can and take good care of my properties. I believe I am fair with the tenants and most would say that I am.

This year has been a nightmare as far as code enforcement inspections go. I have had three inspections which started each month since January of this year and I just finished with them in April. That's four months of inspections, more inspections and the fees that come along with them. It came to no surprise when I received another notice that they are coming out again in June to inspect the final property that I manage, so here I go again.

The city had to come out to one property three times – once for the initial inspection, one for the repairs and a third time for a re-inspection because a tenant had a door passageway between two one bedroom units that he occupies and they wanted either a permit or I had to close it up because of it being a firewall. We closed it up since he could not get a permit and all was fine.

One thing that really upsets me is the penalty portion of the bills. I got a bill from the LA Code Enforcement Program which I knew would be around \$200.00. The bill states, however, that if I am late in paying, after 30 days, they impose a late fee of 250% and the bill goes from \$201.50 to \$705.25. This penalty is horrendous. I feel that is highway robbery! How can they get away with charging that?

I called the city and left several messages for the senior billing and collection supervisor. Someone else from the billing department returned the call and their response was that they don't pass the law, they only enforce it and that I would have to speak with my city council person. Has anyone else complained about this excessive penalty? What can we do? **Harvey Goldsmith**

[From the Editor: AOA sent the below to every Los Angeles City Councilperson and to date, has received no response regarding the contents of the letter.]

Dear City Council Person:

This letter is in reference to the late fee of 250% imposed on LA City Code Enforcement inspection bills to apartment owners. How in the world can you justify and allow a 250% late fee on these bills? The amount due goes from \$201.50 to \$705.25 if paid late!

Anything beyond a 4% late fee for monthly rent to tenants is considered unreasonable by the courts. Yet, a 250% late fee on apartment owners is acceptable to you? You may as well send someone with a gun to collect on these bills - it is just robbery.

What is needed by apartment owners to address this issue and get this horrendous, uncivilized penalty lowered?

Thank you in advance for your personal attention and non-generic response.