

## **What Do YOU Think?**

### **Prior County Inspector Tells Landlords to “Stop Whining”**

Dear AOA:

It seems like every time I read the latest AOA News, some whiny owner is writing the Editor a letter about getting messed with by some inspector. I'm writing you to provide a different take from what I normally read.

Prior to my wife and I purchasing our first (of several, we hope) apartment building earlier this year, I spent 30 years with the Los Angeles County Health Department. Among the many duties I performed was spending MANY years inspecting apartment buildings for violations to housing codes – mainly Los Angeles City proper as well as in the San Fernando Valley.

I literally inspected thousands of multi-family dwellings during my career. Of those thousands inspected, only about 20 required legal action in the form of a criminal action or court case.

Though it might have taken up to several weeks, the vast majority of building owners complied satisfactorily to an issued inspection report. In addition, I was subpoenaed to testify on behalf of tenants who sued their owners for any of several reasons. Of the 22 times I was subpoenaed to testify in these civil matters, 21 of these times the owners lost the case and they deserved to lose. These owners were petty, vindictive or just downright heartless.

The point of the preceding is to emphasize the fact that the vast majority of apartment owners are a bunch of law-respecting folk who don't want any more problems in their life than they already have. While I agree that the City of Los Angeles would impose a 250% penalty or fine for non-compliance to code violations amounts to extortion, you have the ability to avoid a penalty like this just by complying. And, if you can't comply in some way by the re-inspection date, I can't imagine any inspector or supervisor not being realistic about extreme difficulties in complying and being able to work out something amicably – sometimes it just amounts to how you communicate your difficulties.

Look, nobody told you to acquire a building built in 1926. Unless you've got the common sense of an aardvark, you're going to realize such a property will have its own unique set of issues. Why then, would you own such a property without knowing the potential consequences of such ownership?

Finally, to all you owners out there who feel victimized by the enforcement community, read and learn all the criminal codes inspectors enforce and make sure these codes apply to the locale where your property lies. You probably don't have much better to do anyway except trying to find ways to get blood from a turnip or hiding from your tenants.

*[Editor's Note: The author of this letter has wisely withheld his name. We hope he'll write us again after some tenant kicks a hole in the wall, then calls the "Housing" and reports him and then won't let the repair man in or kicks more holes and reports other lies. We also suggest that he not purchase in an outside area where the inspectors aren't his personal friends. What do you think? What's your story? Have an opinion? Send your letter to the AOA office nearest you or email [editor@aoausa.com](mailto:editor@aoausa.com) and tell us what YOU think.]*