

Letter to the Editor...

Los Angeles Housing Department on Invoice Spree!



Dear AOA: I received only an invoice from LAHD regarding a supposed complaint inspection. Upon trying to inquire and rectify the problem, I have encountered such brick walls that I find it, as a landlord, truly frustrating. Ultimately, it would have been more cost efficient for me to pay the \$201.50 bill, even though I have not a clue what the invoice is about.

The time I have put into this matter, obtaining the appeal form, (which was a nightmare!), writing the appeal, etc., has been all absorbing. I have long known there is an imbalance in the landlord/tenant system, but something needs to be done on behalf of all landlords that require LAHD to either have a time limit in how long it takes them to respond to a landlord's inquiry, or they should enclose an appeal form with the invoice or make one available online so that landlords do not have to put their lives on hold in an attempt to obtain answers.

*I have NEVER had any complaints on this property, (I've owned three duplexes since 1992), and there is no prior history with LAHD and the SCEP program, so this is all very upsetting. **This is the first and only notice I have received from SCEP regarding any "complaint inspection"**. Their last annual visit was approximately three years ago, and at that time the building passed the standard inspections implemented by the housing department with their SCEP fee program. This is why I am so perplexed.*

My appeal is really self explanatory and it is my hope that AOA will lobby hard for landlords in this regard and also that this matter will be published in the AOA magazine, so as to enlighten all landlords as to what is going on at LAHD-SCEP. Your assistance is appreciated.

Very truly yours,

Sarah Linn Ritts

[Editor's Note: Here's how it works. LAHD allows two visits to your building per year in exchange for your yearly Code Enforcement fees. Anything beyond can incur an extra charge. So, each and every time a tenant calls the Housing Authority with a complaint, the City **claims** it sends out a letter giving you 15 days to comply before they come out to inspect. When they come to inspect, if you have not corrected the problem within that period, you will be billed the \$201.50. If the problem is corrected, there is no charge – or at least there shouldn't be.

To prevent the City from reaching into your pocket, AOA has recently revised our Rental Agreement to read: **"Tenant must notify landlord with a written notice stating what item(s) need service or repair and give landlord a reasonable opportunity to service or repair that item(s). Should any charges be incurred by the City as a result of not notifying the Landlord in writing of such needed service or repairs, tenant shall be responsible for a minimum of \$201.50 for each occurrence."** It is highly recommended that you obtain our new Rental Agreement or add this clause to any and all future agreements you sign with new tenants.

To avoid problems, read this out loud with your new tenants and have them initial beside the clause upon the signing of the Rental Agreement. Also, be sure to provide them with Repair Request forms, phone numbers and email addresses to report any needed service or repair.

Thank you, Sarah, for taking the time to fight for your rights and for enlightening all of our readers – and congratulations on winning your recent appeal!]