

**City of Los Angeles Raises Code Enforcement Fee for 2006
Are You Prepared for YOUR Inspection?
By Zoran Windrich**

What the New Code Means to Property Owners

The Los Angeles Code Enforcement Ordinance makes all rentable units with two or more units built before 1978, and located in the City of Los Angeles, subject to systematic inspection every three to five years. The inspectors will be issuing "citations" to owners with housing deficiencies.

Any and all deficiencies found in any one unit, or all units, must be corrected within a certain time period.

And ... if the violations do not comply with the repairs ordered, the consequences to your property can be overwhelming and extremely costly.

Unlike earlier years, the Housing Department is now connected "electronically" with other city departments. With this technology, the department has the ability to track the violations through compliance. Of particular importance, the violations must be corrected within 30 days with a possible 15 day grace period.

What does this mean? If your property is cited, you only have 45 days to hire a general contractor and complete the repairs. I strongly recommend that you supervise the work to insure the repairs are done correctly and to code to meet the inspector's approval. Most units I have inspected in the past averaged around \$500 per unit violation to repair. In some cases the repairs were as much as \$3,000 per unit.

The Code's Administrative Impact

The City of Los Angeles' primary concern is that all deficiencies on your property are corrected to insure the safety of the tenants. If you have been cited and the repairs are not corrected within the specified time frame, the matter will be scheduled for a General Manager's hearing. And ... if the violations do not comply with the repairs ordered, the consequences to your property can be overwhelming and extremely costly.

How you ask? Beginning with administrative cost as cited in the code:

"Failure to pay these costs shall result in the placement of a special assessment or lien against the property for administrative costs incurred in connection with the abatement of the violations. ..preparation, inspections, appearances at hearings, the fee of administration and supervision of any work required to abate substandard buildings or violations cited in a notice and order, and all attendant costs for this code enforcement action shall be assessed upon the properly owner, at the accrued hourly rate set forth by the General Manager."

Section 161.206.3, Criminal Penalties, states, "Any person, the owner, or owner's authorized agent who violates, any provision of this code, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and upon conviction there of shall be punished by a fine of up to \$1,000, or by imprisonment not exceeding six months, or by both and that person shall be deemed guilty of a separate offense for every day the violation, disobedience, omission, neglect or refusal shall continue. Any person who does any work in violation of any of the provisions of this code, or any order of the General Manager or an authorized representative made pursuant to this code, and any person having charge of such work who permits it to be done, shall be liable for the penalty provided."

And consider this. Rent Stabilization will garnish rents from the properties through REAP (Rent Escrow Account Program) to pay for the repairs to the cited violations. The rents will be collected by City of Los Angeles because the owner failed to do correct the properties deficiencies. As one can well imagine, the code is enforced stringently with subjective

interpretation from the inspector at time of inspection. I say this with the utmost respect for the staff working as a code enforcement inspector. However, as I have learned from first-hand experience, the quality of the inspection is only as good as the experience of the inspector. Just because one inspector only saw one thing in an apartment doesn't mean you have only one violation. Violations typically vary because of the vast difference in maintenance, upkeep or the condition of the property and units.

What you can learn from this is that being cited for substandard housing is manageable if you know what's expected of you as the owner and are prepared. Bringing your property up to code compliance is a prudent investment and in most cases, creates appreciation in your investment!

[Editor's Note: The new Los Angeles City Code Enforcement fee for 2006 will be raised from \$27.24 to \$35.52 per unit. After you have paid your bill, you may charge each unit \$2.96 per month for the next 12 months by giving your tenants a 30 day written notice to Change the Terms of Tenancy.

The City Code Enforcement Department mailed bills to owners in mid-December. If you have not yet received your bill, please call (877) 614-6873. This applies to buildings within the city of Los Angeles only.]

During the mid 90's, Mr. Windrich worked for the Los Angeles Housing Department for over four years including the development of the New Code Enforcement Unit. This new code was instituted in 1998 and is extremely important for you as an apartment owner to know and understand.

The Windrich Group is an inspection and specification company concerned with helping property owners, managers and lenders comply with the new City of Los Angeles Systematic Code Enforcement Ordinance. Zoran Windrich, President of the Windrich Group, is an expert in the new code and can be reached at 818-883-8733 or at www.windrichgroup.com