The Rental Properties Of Amherst College
212 Northampton Road
Amherst, MA 01002
(413) 542-8506
Fax: (413) 542-8507
rhd@amherst.edu

www.amherst.edu/~rhd

AMHERST COLLEGE

Resident Handbook
Revised Spring 2009

(Read carefully and save for future reference)
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AMHERST COLLEGE HOUSING STANDARDS

The purpose of this policy is to define the Amherst College Housing maintenance and standards.

RENT AND UTILITY PAYMENTS:

Monthly rental payments for College Housing are made through payroll deductions for the current month. Currently, payroll is distributed on the last day of the month at Amherst College. The deduction on the last day of the month will be for that month of occupancy. In the event that a Resident is not on the College payroll, the Amherst College Controller’s Office will generate a bill for the monthly rental payment.

The responsibility for payment of utility costs are incorporated and outlined in the leasing agreement. The Rental Property Department will not process or pay for utility bills that are the responsibility of the Resident.

RENTERS INSURANCE:

Residents of College-owned housing are responsible for any loss or damage that they cause to the property. The College has property insurance on College-owned housing, but that coverage protects only the College’s interest in the property (it protects neither the tenant nor the tenant's personal property, nor does it cover any of the tenant's liability). If, for example, a tenant accidentally caused a fire that heavily damaged a College-owned rental house, the College's property insurance would reimburse the College for the loss. However, the College's insurance company has the right to pursue the tenant for any claim that it paid.

In order to avoid placing its tenants in such a position, the College requires each tenant to carry Renter’s Insurance with at least $100,000 personal liability coverage. Renter’s Insurance protects the tenant if someone claims that he or she accidentally damaged another's property or caused bodily injury.

Each tenant must provide a certificate of insurance from his or her insurance agent demonstrating current coverage in the amount shown above as a minimum within 10 days of the execution of their lease with the College (and annually upon any renewal or extension of lease). It is strongly recommended, however, that each tenant purchase this insurance prior to his or her arrival to Amherst. A policy with these limits plus $12,000.00 of personal property coverage (with a $250.00 deductible) will cost approximately $150.00 per year.

UTILITIES:

Residents must apply to utility companies for electric, fuel oil (if Resident pays for his/her oil heat), Gas if applicable, telephone, and cable services if desired. It generally takes several days from the time of application before service starts. Utility companies may require a deposit prior to servicing the premises.
To apply for service:

- Electric - Western Mass Electric Co. at 800-286-2000
- Phone - Verizon (telephone) at 800-870-9999.
- Cable - Comcast at 888-633-4266.
- Gas - Berkshire Gas at 413-586-3677

Tenants are responsible for turning gas service into their name at the beginning of their tenancy, and back into the Rental Housing Department at the end of the tenancy.

Amherst College will pay for water and sewer services, which are provided by the Town of Amherst.

**KEYS:**

When you move in, a set of keys will be provided for each adult occupant. Should you lose your keys or require additional sets of house keys, please contact the Rental Property Department which will provide you with a new one at a cost of $5 per set. Lock changes and additional locks requests will carry a charge of $50. You cannot get replacement/additional keys made at local vendors.

**TRASH:**

The college provides services for the removal of rubbish and recyclable items to all residents. Rubbish containers should be left curbside before 6:00 AM on the designated date of pickup. The Rental Property Department distributes this schedule on a yearly basis.

**BASEMENTS / FLOODING:**

The potential is always present for a heavy rain or above average snowfall, which can cause flooding of basements. Most college houses have stone foundations, which are porous and damp. Even basements that have never had flooding in the past may experience flooding as a home ages or ground water conditions change. Some houses have sump pumps in the basement. Installation of a sump pump is a last resort consideration and normally not done. The basement is not part of the leased premises. However, the landlord recognizes that tenants may reasonably use the space, mainly for storage. To that end, and as referred to in the Lease, the Rental Housing Department is not responsible for any loss or damage to the tenants’ personal property which is stored in the basement.

The Rental Property Department recommends that all residents do the following:

- Refrain from storing any valuables items in the basement.
- Purchase renters insurance to cover any personal property loss due to flooding.
- Store any items in the basement approximately 6 inches off the floor.

Residents should notify the Rental Property Department when flooding occurs. We will respond to assess the cause of the flooding and take action as appropriate.
BUILDING AND MAINTENANCE INFORMATION

When scheduling maintenance work, emergencies receive top priority, followed by routine maintenance. Discretionary work and special services are scheduled as time and funds are available. Rental Property Department services are limited to college-owned property. The tenant is responsible for reimbursing the College for the expense of repair or replacement to College property resulting from damage or loss caused by the negligence of the tenant or by anyone for whom the tenant is responsible.

ROUTINE REPAIRS AND SERVICE:

Residents are requested to contact the Rental Property Department Office for all maintenance services at 542-8506. Our office hours are from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday (Summer hours 8:30am-4:00pm). Upon receiving your call, a work order will be generated and maintenance personnel will be contacted. Work requests will be addressed on a priority basis. Please do not make requests directly to our repairmen unless it is an emergency, as they have been instructed not to respond to such requests and will direct you to contact the Rental Property Department office.

EMERGENCY REPAIRS AND SERVICE (AFTER HOURS):

A maintenance emergency is defined by the Rental Property Department as a situation that effectively reduces your ability to be housed in your apartment or home. These may include No Heat, No Electricity, No Water, Broken Water Lines, Fire Alarm problem and Blocked Toilet (if this is your only toilet).

For all maintenance emergencies occurring after normal office hours, please call the Rental Property Department at 413-542-8506. We have 24-hour phone coverage and our answering service will take the information regarding your call and will contact the appropriate personnel who will respond to your emergency. Please remain near the phone as the service personnel may require additional information to properly respond to your call. He or she may have to bring specific equipment or request assistance from others within the Rental Property Department.

LOCKOUTS:

Should you be locked out of your unit, you may call the Rental Property Department to let you in from 8:00 a.m.– 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. (Summer hours 8:30am-4:00pm). At night and on the weekends you must call Amherst College Campus Police 413-542-2291 to gain access to your unit. Neither the Rental Property Department nor Campus Police will let your guests or friends into your apartment.
ACCESS:

In case of emergency, the College reserves the right to enter the premises and make necessary repairs without prior notice. Residents will be informed either in writing or by phone that such action was taken, when and why.

PEST/INSECT PROBLEMS:

Extermination includes the elimination of harborage places of insects and rodents, by removing or making inaccessible materials that may serve as their food or breeding ground, by poisoning, spraying, fumigating, trapping or by any other recognized and legal pest elimination method.

Residents of single family homes are responsible for pest control, including rodents, skunks, cockroaches and insect infestation. The Rental Housing Department is responsible for maintaining screens, fences or other structural element necessary to keep rodents and skunks from entering the home.

The Rental Housing Department is responsible for pest control of multi-unit homes. However, residents are expected to make a reasonable effort to eliminate the source of the infestation.

MAJOR REPAIRS AND RENOVATION:

Major building repairs or renovations are addressed by the Rental Property Department through a capital improvement plan and are based on building needs in relationship to the entire rental housing stock at the College. Residents are encouraged to inform the rental office concerning such repairs or improvements so items can be assessed and prioritized. The Rental Housing Department reserves the right to make periodic inspections of the interior and exterior of the rental homes in order to determine their condition. All inspections requiring access to the interior of the units will be coordinated with the tenants in advance.

PAINTING AND REDECORATING:

All housing units that are in good, serviceable condition, as determined by the Rental Property Department, will not be redecorated by the Rental Property Department prior to new Residents' occupancy. All apartments are inspected when vacated, repairs are made, and units are cleaned per the Cleaning Standards prior to new Residents' arrival. Residents are not permitted to paint or wallpaper College-owned property.

APPLIANCES:

Cooking Stoves: The Rental Property Department supplies all college houses and apartments with an electric range. The resident is responsible for cleaning and properly maintaining the oven and range.

Residents may choose to purchase a personal electric range through a private company, in which case, there will be a $25.00 fee for the removal of the College-owned stove. Additionally,
the cost to modify the kitchen for a resident stove will be charged to the resident. Personal ranges purchased by the resident remain the property of the resident, who will also be responsible for their maintenance.

**Refrigerators:** The College supplies refrigerators only to the Merrill Place Apartments and Joseph Smith Apartments, because of the small room size. The Rental Property Department is only responsible for maintaining college owned refrigerators.

**Other:** The College does not supply dishwashers, garbage disposals, and washing machines or clothes dryers. If a resident wishes to purchase any of these units, the Rental Property Department will coordinate the installation with a contractor and will bill the resident for the installation. Built in dishwashers and garbage disposals become the property of the college. The Rental Property Department will take responsibility for maintaining the dishwasher or disposal and will replace the appliance when needed. Replacement of unusual built-in appliances will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. The Rental Property Department must approve requests for built in appliances.

Most housing units have the necessary hook-ups for clothes washer and dryer. If the hook-ups are not in a housing unit, the Rental Property Department will install the necessary plumbing, electrical wiring and venting.

**GROUNDS/SNOW:**

Unless specified otherwise in the lease, residents of single family homes are responsible for the care of grounds, shrubbery, and snow removal. If the Resident does not maintain the grounds and shrubs, the Rental Property Department will contract an outside landscape company and charge the Resident.

The Rental Housing Department is responsible for the grounds and snow removal of multi-family homes.

**SPECIAL WINTER INFORMATION:**

In order to both conserve energy and minimize the possibility of frozen pipes and the resulting damage to College and personal property, you are requested to take the following steps if you plan to be away for more than two days during the winter months (particularly during the Christmas Recess and January Term):

1. Close storm windows completely. (Outside window all the way up and inside window all the way down)
2. Close all outside doors tightly.
3. Keep doors between rooms open. (Particularly between bathrooms, kitchen and adjacent rooms)
4. Open all radiator valves all the way (fully counter-clockwise).
5. Shut off outside water faucets and disconnect hoses.
6. Set thermostat back (but not below 60°F).
7. Check level of oil in oil tank. Be sure there is plenty of oil in tank or set account to be on automatic fill.
8. Do NOT shut off oil burner switch.
9. If you have a washer & dryer and live in a single family home turn the water valves off that allow the water to run into your washing machine.

Notify the Rental Property Department when you leave and give the date you are expected to return. Depending on the circumstances, the Rental Property Department may decide to install a low-temperature alarm during your absence. Failure to properly notify the Rental Property Department may result in freeze-up damages for which the tenant will be responsible. College policy states that residents are responsible for damages that result from frozen pipes if your furnace or boiler does not operate properly during an extended absence. However, if the Rental Property Department is notified of your absence, Rental Property personnel will check the house periodically.

**FURNACES AND BOILERS:**

Problems should be reported to the Rental Property Department at 542-8506. If it is an after-hours emergency leave a message with the answering service at the same number and on-call maintenance personnel will be dispatched. Do not have your oil company do the service. You must contact the Rental Property Department.

The furnaces and boilers are cleaned periodically by a service contractor under contract with the Rental Property Department.

**HEATING AND PLUMBING:**

1. Know where the emergency switch is to your boiler or furnace.
2. Check basement sump pump for proper operation.
3. Know where the main water shut-off is located for your building.
4. Know how to shut-off the water supply to toilets and sinks.
5. During the Fall season, remember to shut-off outside faucets and remove and properly store hoses.

**ELECTRICAL:**

1. Know where the main electrical panel is located and how to shut-off.
2. Familiarize yourself with re-setting circuit breakers.
3. Keep batteries and flashlight available should power failures occur.
OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

RESIDENT RESPONSIBILITY:

1. Window cleaning is the responsibility of the Resident as is the general care and cleaning of the rental unit itself.

2. Lamps or bulbs are the responsibility of the Resident.

3. No large holes should be put into walls or ceilings of the rental units.

4. The installation of additional phone or cable TV lines is the responsibility of the Resident. Additionally, Residents are allowed to install a satellite dish, provided the dish is located on a balcony, railing, terrace, yard, patio or garden that is totally within the exclusive use and control of the resident. Residents are prohibited from placing a dish on outside or exterior walls, roofs, window sills or common-use balconies or stairwells. No part of the dish or antenna can extend beyond the balcony railing line of the person’s apartment. Additionally, Resident cannot drill holes in outside or inside walls, floors, roofs, windows or balcony railings to install the dish or run wiring, and is responsible for any damages resulting from the installation of the dish and/or wiring. Residents must obtain prior authorization from the Rental Housing Department before proceeding with the installation.

5. Please notify the Rental Property Department prior to the installation of an air conditioner, as branch circuits in many older units are inadequate to handle the electrical load of a large air conditioner. The Rental Property Department does not install air conditioners for Residents.

6. Rental Property Department will clean ductwork as necessary and will replace furnace air filters twice annually. Residents are responsible for cleaning dryer vents annually. Rental Housing Department will coordinate the dryer vent cleaning and will bill the Residents for the service.

AMHERST COLLEGE RESPONSIBILITY:

1. The Rental Property Department will check and clean, if necessary, all chimneys that service the primary heating equipment for the building.

2. The Rental Property Department will inspect, service, tune and clean all boilers and furnaces on rental property. The Rental Property Department will inspect and clean all roof gutters and associated down spouts on rental property as required.

3. The Rental Property Department will inspect the interior and exterior of all rental units annually and prepare work orders for needed repairs and/or improvements needed. All but emergency repairs will be scheduled as time and finances allow and will be accomplished in relationship to all other building needs within the Amherst College Rental Property inventory.
4. The Rental Property Department will check CO and smoke detectors and replace batteries annually. If either alarm (CO or smoke) is “beeping”, please notify the Rental Housing Department immediately.

SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS:

For disturbance or other related security issues please call Amherst College Campus Police at 413-542-2291. For fires, CO alarms or other police emergencies call 911 immediately.

Safety
1. Check all window and door locks and assure they operate properly.
2. Occasionally check gutters. Rental Property Department will clean the gutters when necessary.
3. Residents should take reasonable care to prevent pests or rodents from gaining access to buildings.
4. Be prepared for the first snowstorm. Residents should have shovels and sand or rock salt.
5. Properly store any hazardous chemical such as paint thinner, gasoline, oil, etc.
6. Door viewers can be requested.

Fire
1. Residents should purchase fire extinguishers and place in an easily accessible location.
2. Residents should become familiar with the primary escape routes from the building and establish a meeting place outside the home.
3. Keep a list of emergency phone numbers adjacent to the telephone.
4. If the residence has a working fireplace and/or wood stove, The Rental Housing Department will have the chimney inspected and cleaned biennially by an outside contractor and will bill the resident for the service (although this could be done annually if the Rental Housing Department determines that the woodstove or fireplace are being used frequently enough to warrant a more frequent inspection and cleaning. Rental Property Department is responsible for the inspection and cleaning of the fireplace and chimney only when a resident initially moves into a house or apartment. The college personnel inspect and clean the chimney used by the primary heating system (furnace) as often as necessary.

PET OWNERSHIP:

The pet policy has been established to provide for the health and safety of the occupants and visitors of rental housing.

Residents agree to register and immunize their pets in accordance with local pet ordinances. Pets must display current identification and vaccination tags, including a current rabies tag, at all times. Pets shall not cause danger, damage, nuisance, noise or health hazards. Additionally, pets shall not soil the apartment, premises, grounds, common areas, walks, parking areas, landscaping or gardens. Lessee agrees to clean up promptly after their pets and to properly dispose of dog waste and cat litter.
Violations of these guidelines will generally be handled through a system of progressive corrective measures that will be administered by the Rental Housing Department as follows:

First Offense – RHD will provide the pet owner with a verbal notice of the specific violation and will remind them of the guidelines. RHD will also file a written record of the conversation in the pet owner’s file.

Second Offense – RHD will provide the pet owner with a written notice of the specific violation and will remind them again of the guidelines. A copy of the letter will be filed in the pet owner’s file.

Third Offense – RHD will request the immediate removal of the pet from the premises.

However, the Rental Housing Department may ask for the immediate removal of the pet from the premises depending on the severity of the violation.

If the pet owner is concerned that the determination of the RHD is not fair, equitable and based on objective evidence, they may appeal the decision through the Housing Committee. The Housing Committee will review the evidence presented by the dog owner and the RHD and will make a final determination. The Housing Committee may also seek input from the Chief of Campus Police.

**VACATING RENTAL HOUSING:**

All leases terminate on June 30 of the current fiscal year. Residents whose appointments at Amherst College terminate at the end of an academic year must vacate the premises by no later than June 30 of that year. There will be no proration of rent if the tenant vacates College housing prior to the termination of the lease.

Residents are required to notify the Rental Property Department of their exact departure date from College housing at least thirty (30) days in advance.

**Utilities**

It is the responsibility of the vacating Resident to disconnect their telephone service, cable, electricity and gas if applicable.

**Final Check List**

a. All appliances should be cleaned and left in the same condition as they were upon arrival of the Resident.

b. Stove burners and ovens should be left clean for the next Resident.

c. The refrigerator should be cleaned and defrosted. It should be shut off or unplugged and the door left open.

d. All materials should be cleared from closets, cupboards, and storage areas.

e. All trash should be removed from the attic, basement, storage areas, and living areas. All areas of the apartment or house should be left broom clean.

f. Bathroom and fixtures should be left clean.

g. All windows and doors should be closed and locked.
h. Sweep all floors
i. Mow lawn and trim shrubs.
j. Keys must be returned to the Rental Property Department. $50.00 will be deducted from your deposit if the keys issued to you are not returned.
k. The oil tank must be filled.
l. Advise the Rental Property Department of forwarding address.

**Inspection**

It is customary for a representative of the Rental Property Department to inspect the premises prior to the departure of the Resident. If the inspection reveals damage or excessive trash or if substantial cleaning is involved, in accordance with the lease agreement, the College will bill the Resident the amount necessary to cover the costs of repair and/or cleaning.