

LANDLORD'S GUIDE TO UTILITIES

Tips to help avoid unexpected charges, utility disconnection and other issues.



As a landlord, it is important to understand your rights and responsibilities regarding utilities. Use this guide to ensure you are well-prepared!

What to do before your tenant signs a lease

Decide who will pay for utilities.

Clarify with your tenant who is responsible for each utility. Point out where this is specified in the lease. Remember, landlords cannot apply for utilities on behalf of tenants.

Inform tenants if property is sub-metered.

Advise on how sub-metering accounts are set up and specify who the tenant should pay (the landlord or the sub-metering company directly.)

Clarify utility costs for shared spaces.

Decide how utilities for shared spaces will be paid, and clearly outline these terms in the rental agreement.

Utility cost transparency.

If utilities are included in the rent, tenants are entitled to see how they are calculated. Be sure to have this information available if requested.

Utility setup verification.

Landlords cannot verify utility setups if they are not the account holder. Request proof of enrollment as part of the lease agreement.

Clearly communicate utility arrangements.

Discuss utility arrangements with tenants and ensure they understand their responsibilities. Consider providing information about their utility options. Reach out to the UCA for resources that you can distribute to your tenants.

Premise Vacancy Agreements

To avoid surprise bills or disconnections, landlords may set up a **Premise Vacancy Agreement (PVA)** or a Landlord Agreement with the regulated rate provider. A PVA allows landlords to determine what happens at their property when no one is set up for billing.

Contact your regulated rate provider directly to ask if they offer a PVA or Landlord Agreement and what your options are.





Allow Time for Utility Setup. Ensure there is ample time to arrange utility services, especially if a tenant moves in with less than 30 days' notice or during peak moving seasons (spring and summer). Delays in setting up utilities can affect both tenant satisfaction and property management. Proactively manage utility transitions and maintain open communication with tenants to avoid interruptions and ensure a smooth move-in process.

Utility management during tenant transitions

Charges incurred during tenant transitions.

The property owner is responsible for all utility charges on the property, from the date the previous tenants close their account until a new tenant opens theirs.

Liability for utility payments.

If the tenant fails to pay their utility bills, the landlord is not liable for any charges incurred. However, if the tenants do not put the utilities in their name, the property owner will be held responsible for those charges. Utility companies must seek payment from the tenant.

Notification of disconnection.

The utility company will only contact the account holder about pending disconnections, so landlords will not be informed unless they are the account holder. When a tenant moves out, it's important to check the property and ensure that services are active.

Reconnection fees after disconnection.

If a tenant fails to pay their utility bills, the utility company may disconnect services. The landlord may need to cover reconnection fees to restore them; otherwise, the reconnection fee will be the responsibility of the next person to set up services in their name.

Service options for vacant properties

You have a few options for turning off electricity, natural gas and water services to a vacant rental property.

Turn off the breakers.

If the temperature remains warm enough at night, you can turn off the breakers and water at the main while leaving services running to the meter. This stops consumption, but you'll still receive a monthly bill for non-energy costs.

Request disconnection at the meter.

Contact your retailer to disconnect services at the meter. Be aware that your property may incur idle billing charges during this time.

Before making a decision, do the research. Compare the costs of idle charges and reconnection fees with the expense of turning off the breakers and paying the monthly non-energy costs. This will help you make an informed choice regarding the management of utility services during vacancies.

Handling issues/disputes



Stay informed

Refer to the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) Handbook for Landlords and Tenants for comprehensive rights and responsibilities.

Resolve disputes

Use the Residential Tenancy Dispute Resolution Service (RTDRS) for conflicts related to unpaid utilities or other lease issues.

Ask for help

Contact the Utilities Consumer Advocate (UCA) for advice on utility rates, disputes, or other related issues.