



Chicago Rents Right

Good Tenants, Good Landlords, Great Neighborhoods!



Brandon Johnson
Mayor of Chicago

Approved by the City of Chicago: July 2020
Summary Revised: December 2023



Residential Landlord Tenant Ordinance Summary

At initial offering, this Summary of the ordinance must be attached to every written rental agreement and upon initial offering for renewal. The Summary must also be given to a tenant at initial offering of an oral agreement, whether the agreement is new or a renewal.

{Mun. Code Ch. 5-12-170}

IMPORTANT: IF YOU SEEK TO EXERCISE RIGHTS UNDER THE ORDINANCE, OBTAIN A COPY OF THE ENTIRE ORDINANCE TO DETERMINE APPROPRIATE REMEDIES AND PROCEDURES. CONSULTING AN ATTORNEY IS RECOMMENDED.

Any terms in a lease that conflicts with applicable portions of the RLTO are unenforceable.

IMPORTANT NOTICE—These provisions apply to all residential units, regardless of whether they are covered by the RLTO.

Under the 2020 revisions of the RLTO (“Fair Notice Ordinance”), Landlords must provide a tenant that is not in the eviction process:

- 30 days of notice to terminate a month-to-month tenancy, decline to renew your lease or raise your rent if you have lived in your apartment for less than six months.
- 60 days of notice for the same if you have lived in your apartment for more than six months but less than three years.
- 120 days of notice for the same if you have lived in your apartment for more than three years.

Lockouts are illegal under Ordinance

- It is illegal for a landlord to lock out a tenant. Examples include: changing, removing, or plugging locks; removing doors or windows of a rental unit; removing tenant’s personal property from a rental unit; cutting off heat, utility or water services; or doing anything else which that makes any part of the unit or tenant’s personal property inaccessible or uninhabitable for the purpose of forcing the tenant to move
- The Police Department is responsible for enforcement of the RLTO’s prohibition against lockouts. (Police Special Order 93-12)
- The landlord shall be fined \$200-\$500 for each day the lockout occurs or continues.

What rental units are not covered by the Ordinance? {MUN. CODE CH. 5-12-010 & 5-12-020}

- Units in owner occupied buildings with six or fewer units.
- Units in hotels, motels, rooming houses, unless rent is paid monthly and the unit is occupied for more than 32 continuous days.
- School dormitory rooms, hospitals, shelters, employee’s quarters, non-residential rental properties.
- Owner occupied co-ops and condominiums.
- Employee housing

IMPORTANT NOTICE- The following provisions apply only to rental units covered by the RLTO

Under the Fair Notice Ordinance, if you have been given an eviction notice for nonpayment

You now have the one-time right to remain in your apartment and end the eviction case against you if you: pay all your back rent owed and pay any court filing fees your landlord has paid in your eviction case. You are free to make these payments until a judge issues a formal eviction order against you.

What are tenants required to do?*



The tenant, the tenant’s family, and invited guests must comply with all obligations imposed specifically upon tenants by provision of the Municipal Code, applicable to dwelling units, including section 7-28-850 {MUN. CODE CH. 5-12-040; 14X-1-103.3}:

- Buying and installing working batteries in smoke and carbon monoxide detectors within tenant’s apartment.
- Regularly testing smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms and notifying the owner in writing of any deficiencies.
- Keeping the unit safe and clean.

The tenant must permit access to the rental unit to the landlord upon receiving two days’ notice that the landlord intends to enter for the following purposes {Mun. Code Ch. 5-12-050}:

- Make repairs, supply services and perform necessary inspections

In cases of emergency, the tenant must allow access to the rental unit without receiving two days’ notice.

***For a complete list, review the [RLTO Ordinance](#).**

Please note: Except in cases of emergencies, tenants should not change the locks on their units without first notifying their landlord. If the tenant does change the locks, they must provide the landlord with a key.

What are landlords required to do?*

- Give tenant written notice of the owner’s or manager’s name, address, and telephone number or for a person authorized to act on behalf of the owner for the purpose of service of process and for the purpose of receiving notices and demands. {Mun. Code Ch. 5-12-090}
- Within seven days of being served a foreclosure complaint, an owner or landlord of a premises that is the subject of the foreclosure complaint shall disclose, in writing, to all tenants of the premises that a foreclosure action has been filed. The owner or landlord shall also notify of a foreclosure suit, in writing, before a tenant signs a lease. {Mun. Code Ch. 5-12-095}
- To give new or renewing tenants notice of:
 1. Code citations issued by the City in the previous 12 months for the rental unit or common areas;
 2. Pending Housing Court or administrative hearing actions affecting the rental unit or common areas;
 3. During the entire occupancy, any notice of intent by a utility provider to shut off Water, electrical or gas service to the building. {Mun. Code Ch. 5-12-100}
- To maintain the property in compliance with all applicable provisions of the Municipal Code. {Mun. Code Ch. 5-12-070}

***For a complete list, review the [RLTO Ordinance](#).**

SECURITY DEPOSITS AND PREPAID RENT {MUN. CODE CH. 5-12-080 AND 5-12-081}*

- A landlord must give a tenant a receipt for a security deposit; however, if the security deposit is paid electronically, the landlord has the option to give an electronic receipt.
- A landlord must hold all security deposits in a federally insured interest-bearing account in a financial institution located in Illinois. Security deposits and interest thereon shall not be commingled with the assets of the landlord.
- The landlord must provide via a written rental agreement or in other writing within 14 days of receipt of the security deposit detailing which financial institution the security deposit will be deposited.
- A landlord must pay interest each year on security deposits and prepaid rent held more than six months by either cash or credit to be applied to rent due. The rate of interest a landlord must pay is set each year by the City Comptroller.
- Before expenses for damages can be deducted from the security deposit, the landlord must provide the tenant with an itemized statement of the damages within 30 days of the date the tenant vacates and an estimated or actual cost for repairing or replacing damaged items, attaching copies of the paid receipts for the repair or replacement.
- A landlord must return all security deposits and required interest, if any, minus unpaid rent and expenses for damages, within 45 days from the date the tenant vacates the unit.
- In the event of a fire, a landlord must return all security deposit and required interest, if any, minus unpaid rent and expenses for damages, within seven days from the date that the tenant provides notice of termination of the rental agreement. {Mun. Code Ch. 5-12-110(g)}



- Subject to correcting a deficient amount of interest paid to a tenant on a security deposit, if a landlord fails to comply with specified security deposit requirements the tenant shall be awarded damages in an amount equal to two times the security deposit plus interest.

***For more information regarding security deposits, especially in the event of property transfer, please review the [RLTO Ordinance](#).**

SUBLEASES {MUN. CODE CH. 5-12-120}

If a tenant moves prior to the end of the rental agreement, the landlord must make a good faith effort to find a new tenant at a fair rent. However, if the landlord is unsuccessful in re-renting the unit, the tenant remains liable for the rent under the rental agreement, as well as the landlord’s cost of advertising. The landlord must accept a reasonable subtenant offered by the tenant without charging additional fees.

ATTORNEY’S FEES {MUN. CODE CH. 5-12-180}

Except in eviction actions, the prevailing plaintiff in any action arising from the application of this Ordinance shall be entitled to recover all court costs and reasonable attorney’s fees.

What happens if there are problems during tenancy, and what are the available remedies?

TENANT REMEDIES {MUN. CODE CH. 5-12-110}

Minor Defects

If the landlord fails to maintain the property in compliance with the Code and the tenant or the tenant’s family or guests are not responsible for the failure, the tenant may:

1. Request in writing that the landlord make repairs within 14 days, and if the landlord fails to do so the tenant may withhold an amount of rent that reasonably reflects the reduced value of the unit. Rent withholding begins from the 15th day until repairs are made; OR
2. Request in writing that the landlord make repairs within 14 days and if the landlord fails to do so the tenant may have the repairs made and deduct up to \$500 or 1/2 of the month’s rent without exceeding one month’s rent. Repairs must be done in compliance with the Code and receipts must be provided to the landlord; and also
3. File suit against the landlord for damages and injunctive relief.

Major Defects

If the landlord fails to maintain the property in compliance with the Code, and the failure renders the premises not reasonably fit and habitable, the tenant may request in writing that the landlord make repairs within 14 days. If repairs are not made, the tenant may immediately terminate the lease and the landlord shall return all prepaid rent, security and interest recoverable by the tenant. If the tenant does not move out in 30 days then the tenant's notice is considered withdrawn.

*Failure to Provide Essential Services**

If, contrary to the lease, an essential service is not provided (heat, running or hot water, electricity, gas, or plumbing) and this is NOT due to a utility provider’s failure, or if the landlord fails to maintain the building in material compliance with the Code, and the tenant or tenant’s family or guests are not responsible for such failure, after giving written notice, the tenant may do ONE of the following:

1. Get the essential service restored and deduct the cost from the rent after giving the landlord paid receipts; OR
2. File a lawsuit against the landlord and recover damages based on the reduced value of the dwelling unit; OR
3. Get substitute housing and be excused from paying rent for the period that the tenant cannot stay in the rental unit, OR
4. Request that the landlord correct the failure within 24 hours and if the landlord fails to do so, withhold from the monthly rent an amount that reasonably reflects the reduced value of its premises.

***For more information, review the [RLTO Ordinance](#).**



Fire or Casualty Damage

If a fire damages the unit to an extent that it is in material noncompliance with the Code and the tenant, tenant’s family or guests are not responsible for the fire or accident, the tenant may:

1. Move out immediately and provide written notice to the landlord of the intention to terminate the rental agreement within 14 days after moving out.
2. If legal, the tenant may stay in the unit but if they cannot use a portion of the unit because of damage, the rent may be reduced to reflect the reduced value of the unit.
3. If the tenant stays, and the landlord fails to diligently carry work to repair the rental unit, the tenant may notify the landlord, in writing, within 14 days after the tenant becomes aware that the work is not being diligently carried out, of the tenant’s intention to terminate the rental agreement and move out.

LANDLORD REMEDIES*

WHAT HAPPENS IF A TENANT PAYS RENT LATE?

- If the tenant fails to pay rent on time, the landlord may charge a late fee of \$10.00 per month on rents under \$500 plus 5% per month on that part of the rent that exceeds \$500.00 {MUN. CODE CH. 5-12-140 (H)}
- If the tenant fails to pay rent, the landlord, after giving five days written notice to the tenant, may terminate the rental agreement. However, the tenant may remain in the unit with a rental agreement in good standing if the tenant pays the full amount of back rent and landlord court filing fees before a judge issues an eviction order.
- If, however, the tenant uses this provision and later receives a second written notice of nonpayment, the tenant will have only five days to pay unpaid rent and will not have an opportunity to pay the back rent to ensure dismissal of the eviction action. {MUN. CODE CH. 5-12-130(a)}
 - If the landlord accepts the late rent , the landlord may not evict the tenant. {MUN. CODE CH. 5-12-130 (g)}
 - If the tenant fails to comply with the Code or the rental agreement, the landlord may give a written notice to the tenant of the specific acts or omissions that violated the code or rental agreement, and of the tenant’s right to remedy the breach within 10 days. The landlord may terminate the rental agreement if tenant fails to correct the violation within the 10-day notice period. {MUN. CODE CH. 5-12-130 (b)}
 - If the tenant fails to comply with the Code or the rental agreement, the landlord may request in writing that the tenant comply as promptly as conditions permit in the case of emergency, or within 14 days. If the breach is not corrected in the specified period, the landlord may enter the dwelling unit and have the necessary work done. In this case, the tenant shall be responsible for all costs of repairs. {MUN. CODE CH. 5-12-130 (c)}

*For more information, review the [RLTO Ordinance](#).

PROHIBITION ON RETALIATORY CONDUCT BY LANDLORD {MUN. CODE CH. 5-12-150}

A tenant has the right to complain or testify in good faith about their tenancy to governmental agencies or officials, police, media, community groups, tenant unions or the landlord. A tenant has the right to undertake any right or remedy provided by law without retaliation from the landlord. A landlord is prohibited from retaliating by terminating or threatening to terminate a tenancy, increasing rent, decreasing services, bringing, or threatening to bring an eviction action, or refusing to renew a lease agreement.

For more information

Visit the City of Chicago Department of Housing website at: chicago.gov/rto. For a copy of the Ordinance, visit the Office of the City Clerk, Room 107, City Hall, 121 North LaSalle Street, Chicago, Illinois or view it at the Municipal Reference Library, Harold Washington Library, 5th Floor, 400 S. State Street, Chicago, Illinois.

A message about porch safety:

The porch or deck of this building should be designed for a live load of up to 100 lbs. per square foot and is safe only for its intended use. Protect your safety. Do not overload the porch or deck. If you have questions about porch or deck safety, call the City of Chicago non-emergency number, 3-1-1.