Landlords and Preventative Maintenance

by Ashoka Lion

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The law requires that landlords keep their properties habitable; generally this indicates the bare minimum: water, electric, weatherproof, etc. However, as a responsible landlord, and to avoid accumulating heavy and unexpected costs due to repairs, it is advisable to maintain your properties with continual upkeep, inspections and repairs. According to many experts, property owners are advised to set aside approximately 1%-3% of the property's market value each year and put that towards maintenance. Even if you do not use the entire sum, continue to save it for unexpected or large repairs. By taking care of small things as they arise you will save money, increase property value and keep your tenants happier.

Suggested upkeep that will save you money

Set aside one or two times a year for an inspection of your properties, for large appliances such as air conditioning or heating this is highly advised and will be appreciated by your tenants who want the most energy efficiency for their money. The ownerâ€™s who are unable to do these kinds of inspections can retain property management firms to do this on their behalf as well as handle the other needs that arise in your role as landlord.

The following is not a complete list, but it is a starting point for your annual review:

1. Clean gutter and roof: This will not only reduce the risk of backed up drainage and leaking, but will also allow you to be aware of any missing shingles or damages to the roof.

2. Clean and paint: Your tenants will greatly appreciate a fresh coat of interior or exterior paint. This will also give you a chance to patch any knicks or dings that may have occurred in the house. While it is natural to want to keep your properties neutral and similar, you may want to consider giving tenants an option of three colours for painting

3. Carpet/floor cleaning: Nothing makes a house look clean like a professionally steamed carpet. Ideally, this should be done annually to remove stains that could become permanent if left over years.

4. Check interior drains: Damaged or worn faucets may result in leaks that will be expensive to the water bill and also to the property. While you can inspect, property managers or land lords should also respond quickly if a tenant does complain about any continuously clogged drains or leak as this could be evidence of more serious problems.

5. General repairs: During your inspection check for things that may not need immediate attention, but that could become problems in the future. Things like cracks in the driveway may your property look unkempt and can expand with time. Most importantly, you do not want to run the risk of any lawsuits due to safety; examine stair rails, attics etc. for loose brackets or floorboards.

Determine what is best for you and your tenants:

In order to maintain a good working relationship with your tenants they have to know that you are interested in their welfare and the upkeep of the property. The landlord or the property manager should communicate with them several days in advance to determine a good time for both of you, and please then remind them in advance. The trick is to maintain proper upkeep on your property without seeming overbearing. If items do need repairs or professional inspections, once again

communicate with both the tenant and a trusted company to ensure that there is complete understanding on both parties. Through your preventative maintenance, you will save money and increase tenants' length of stay.

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