

Just as the merchant depends on the customer for his livelihood, so does the landlord depend on the tenant. This places the tenant in a unique and powerful position. By renting from responsible landlords, and by refusing to rent from landlords who neglect their properties and close their eyes to illegal activity, you convey a clear message, i.e., landlords who allow illegal activity on their property will see their occupancy rates decline and their profits dwindle.

This pamphlet is intended as a guideline to help you, the tenant, identify which landlords and properties are least inviting to the criminal element. By being selective, you are rewarding the crime prevention efforts of good landlords, and you are rewarding yourself with a safe, crime-free, and healthy environment.

How does the property look?

Criminals prefer to act anonymously, and will look for properties where they won't be seen or identified. Good landlords know this, and will make their properties visible to neighbors and police. Taken alone, few of the following crime prevention techniques will have a significant impact. Taken together, they will deter some criminals from wanting to move onto the property.

NOTE: Not every property owner can afford to apply all of these principles, but the presence of at least a few suggests a concerned and responsible landlord:

- **Community facilities.** Recreational or other facilities encourage neighbors to become acquainted.
- **Architectural planning.** Alcoves and concealed areas where an intruder could gain entry unnoticed are nonexistent or minimal. In larger complexes, buildings are set back from the perimeter street to deter the casual passerby from entering the complex area. Off-street parking is provided in a secure place with controlled access.
- **Lighting.** Entrances, walkways, parking lots, complex perimeters, activity areas, and backyards should be lit. Motion or light-sensitive lighting is especially good. Consider visiting the property at night to check on its visibility.
- **Fencing.** All parking areas adjacent to the perimeter of the complex have a six foot fence, or a wrought iron barrier to the outside, to deny access from the outside and to prevent parking lots from being used as shortcuts. Where possible, fence design should allow for visibility.
- **Landscaping.** Bushes around windows and doorways are well trimmed and do not impair the view of entrances and windows. Plants are used as barriers to ground floor apartment windows, i.e., pyracantha

planted under windows, trimmed to just below the window sill.

- **Clearly-posted addresses.** Only the drug house operator will benefit if the address is difficult to read from the street. If the complex consists of several buildings, each building is identified on at least two sides with large building numbers clearly visible to adjacent parking areas both day and night.
- **Permanent map** (for large complexes). Located at each driveway entrance, this includes a "you are here" point of reference. The maps are clearly visible in all weather and well-lit.
- **Doors/locks.** Every apartment has solid core entrance doors with case-hardened steel single-cylinder deadbolt locks, one inch throw bolts, and corresponding security strike plates. These doors are equipped with 190° peepholes.
- **Security for common areas.** Laundry rooms and storage areas are locked. Doors which are otherwise locked are not propped open. There is control over who enters and leaves the building.

How does the neighborhood look?

A clean, well-kept neighborhood is a positive indicator, but appearances can be deceiving. Talk to neighbors to get a sense of what kind of area it really is. Be able to recognize warning signs, features of a neighborhood that suggest the presence of criminal activity.

- **Graffiti.** Gangs use graffiti to claim their territory, challenge other gangs, and intimidate a neighborhood. Taken alone, graffiti may not be significant, but when coupled with other indicators of criminal activity, it could be a warning sign.
- **Unusual traffic.** In a working or middle-class neighborhood, regular visits by people in BMWs, Jaguars, Rolls-Royces, and Cadillacs are highly suspect. Heavy biker-type traffic may also be a signal that all is not as it seems.
- **Fortifications.** Homes and apartments with blacked-out windows or other unusual and extraordinary fortifications, such as electrified fences or walls topped with razor wire, are suspicious.
- **Suspicious people.** Black baseball caps with Los Angeles logos, red or blue handkerchiefs prominently displayed, extreme hairstyles, tattoos, and the use of hand signals may suggest gang involvement. Also, if you see people exchanging small packets for cash, there is a problem.
- **Miscellaneous signs.** Other signs include heavy condensation on the inside of windows, large packages being moved between vehicles and home, trucks and vans with out-of-state plates, "lookouts", ammonia or other chemical smells, heavy machinery or exhaust fan noises, or expensive vehicles owned by people otherwise associated with a lower standard of living.

How responsible is the Landlord?

An irresponsible landlord might say, "The rent is \$450 a month, but if you never call, I'll only charge \$425."

Responsible landlords, conversely, will take the applicant screening process very seriously. Don't be put off by application fees or deposits, and don't be insulted by detailed questions on the application. If the landlord is scrutinizing your application, you will have the peace of mind of knowing that other renters are being screened equally as well, and that the risk of illegal activity occurring in the area is reduced.

Effective landlords are active managers, committed to providing honest tenants with good housing and to keeping dishonest tenants out. Effective landlords will:

- Thoroughly screen each applicant using credit checks, previous landlords, and other means.
- Apply rental criteria equally to every applicant.
- Insist upon a complete application, filled in on-site or during an application interview.
- Require two pieces of good identification, i.e., driver's license, military ID, etc.
- Document everything in writing.
- Conduct periodic inspections of the property.
- Encourage community gatherings so neighbors can get to know each other.

Effective landlords will have rental agreement provisions like the following:

- No subleasing.
- Only those listed on the rental agreement are permitted to occupy the unit.
- No drug activity will be tolerated.
- Tenants will not unduly disturb the neighbors.
- Visitors may stay no longer than ____ days, and only with the landlord's permission.

Effective landlords live up to their responsibilities. They will assure that:

- Roofs, walls, doors, and windows are water and weather-proofed.
- There are no vermin, rodents, rubbish, and garbage.
- Heat, electrical lighting and wiring, plumbing, water supply, safe drinking water, and sewer connections are supplied and maintained.
- Sufficient garbage receptacles and removal of same are provided.
- Floors, ceilings, and walls are in good repair.
- Ventilating, air conditioning and other facilities or appliances are maintained.
- The premises are kept safe, including from fire hazards.
- Working locks for all dwelling entrances and keys for locks are provided.

Your role as Tenant

Now that you've scrutinized your future rental unit, neighborhood, and landlord, you may wish to take a look at yourself. As a tenant, you are required:

- To use the various parts of the premises (including electrical, plumbing, sanitary, heating, ventilating, etc.) in a reasonable manner considering their intended purpose and design.
- To keep the premises as clean and safe as the condition of the premises permits.
- To dispose of garbage, ashes, rubbish and other waste cleanly and safely.
- To keep plumbing fixtures clean.
- Not to destroy, deface, damage, impair or remove any part of the premises or permit another person to do so.
- Not to disturb the neighbor's peaceful enjoyment of the premises.

Failure to meet your responsibilities as a tenant can mar your rental history and, in the future, make you an unattractive applicant to a responsible landlord. But don't stop here --- do more than the minimum: become involved in your new neighborhood, watch out for your neighbors, assist your landlord in keeping your rental "safe by design", and report suspicious activity to the police.

Finally, view your relationship with your landlord, neighbors, and police as a partnership. Every one of us are allies, not adversaries, and we constitute a force more powerful than crime itself, as long as we are committed to that partnership and the responsibilities it entails.

For more information...

Crime Free Programs
Mesa Police Department
130 North Robson
Mesa, Arizona 85201-6697
480-644-2090

If you have an emergency call 9-1-1.

**If you need an officer to respond,
call 644-2211.**

Neither the publisher nor the author of this pamphlet is engaged in rendering legal services. If legal assistance is required, the services of a competent attorney should be sought.

**Mesa Police Department
www.mesaaz.gov**



Tips For Tenants

A Guide To Renting & Crime Prevention