



Hope to See You Soon!

There's an opportunity coming your way soon that I hope you don't pass up.

On January 30th the Mexico Public Safety Department and the Mexico Housing Authority are joining together to present a two-session program aimed at property owners / managers and interested community members.

The beginning session will address how to cultivate and keep a crime free/drug free neighborhood and community. This presentation will be conducted by Mexico Public Safety and is a "don't miss" for anyone owning or managing property or interested in ridding the community of criminal activity. Many of you have been affected by tenants or neighbors whose drug use/dealing or criminal acts have impacted your rental property whether it be in the good tenants you lose, the bad tenants who damage your property, the neighbors who scare off good tenant prospects or the bad reputation a neighborhood acquires that keeps units from being rented to reliable tenants.

The second session will be presented by Robert J. Wise, attorney, who practices out of the Kansas City area.

Mr. Wise will be here to speak about landlord/tenant law, collections, Fair Housing laws and other property issues.

The first session begins at 9:00 a.m. and the second begins at 1:00 p.m. Both sessions will be held in the Garfield Community Center which is the cream-colored building attached to our administrative office by a covered walkway. There will be a small registration fee of \$ 10.00 for the second session to defray the expense of sponsoring the speaker.

Each of you were sent a flyer with a registration form printed on it and we have already started to get sign-ups just two days after mail out.

This is a new venture for our community and one we will all benefit from if we participate.

See you there!

INTERESTING FACTS

Highest violent crime rate? South Carolina.

Highest rate of women in State or Federal prisons? Oklahoma.

Highest number of hate crimes per capita? Washington, D. C.

In pure number terms, more crimes are committed in America than in any other nation. The same goes for burglaries, car thefts, rapes and assaults.

The infectiousness of crime is like that of the plague. —Napoleon Bonaparte

“Oh, the Weather Outside is Frightful...” but the heating bill is even scarier.

By now many of you have received your power bills for the past month. My deepest sympathies.

As landlords you many want to check with the power company to see how your properties are doing energy-wise.

I have written about this before, but since many of my friends and family are experiencing shock and dismay at this month's heating costs, it bears repeating.

The average income of our

families in Section 8 is \$11,684.23 as reported in the previous newsletter. The typical family spends \$1900 per year in utility expenses. An increase in utilities may force your tenant to make a decision between paying the power company or paying the landlord.

A weatherization program funded by the federal government is being administered by the local HDC office. Low income families may be eligible to receive free weatherization of

their home at no cost to the property owner or tenant. If you feel your tenant would benefit from this program, refer them to the local HDC office. They can determine their eligibility and give them information on how the program works.

AmerenUE reports the current cost of 1 kilowatt hour of electricity is 7¢ and one million BTUs of natural gas costs \$11.07.

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The real significance of crime is in its being a breach of faith with the community of mankind.

—Joseph Conrad

Stranger Danger

I hope I don't seem negative and fear mongering in this issue but safety is of prime importance in our world today.

The time when we left our homes for a quick trip to the store and didn't bother to lock the door or allowed our children the freedom to roam in the neighborhood without worry may be gone. I know as a child if I did something wrong four doors down it was on my doorstep by the time I got home. Neighbors looked out for each other and their children and there was some security in that.

Today we lock our cars and homes but then get careless about other things.

How many of you have shown property to a total stranger alone?

How many have sent your staff to show property without knowing who they were with or to what unit they

were going?

Please exercise caution and adopt safe practices for yourself and your employees in these situations.

Some tips to go by are:

1. Never show a unit to anyone unless they have some form of ID.
2. Make copies of this ID and secure it in the office under lock and key. You can give it back to them when they leave.
3. If more than one person is with them and you don't feel comfortable, trust your instincts and schedule an appointment when someone else can go with you.
4. Always know where your staff are supposed to be showing a unit. If possible give them a cell phone and have a code word for trouble they can use if need be.

5. Contact your local law enforcement and ask if they can give you information on safe practices.
6. Encourage your staff to enroll in self-defense classes if possible. That's something they can use anywhere, anytime.
7. Be extremely alert when making rent collections.
8. Carrying a gun is not advisable. However there are other protection devices available. Check your state beforehand to make sure they are legal to carry.

Trust your gut feelings. Better safe than sorry.

A New Year, A New Start

A new year is a great time to sit down and reevaluate your rental property program.

Here are some suggestions for a fresh start.

1. List all your properties on a worksheet.
2. Review your insurance on each property. Is it enough?
3. Compare your costs of insurance, taxes, mortgage payments ,if any, and maintenance

for each property. Is it time for an increase in rent? A small increase each year may be preferable to a large increase at one time after many years . If you rent to low income families, a significant increase will result in certain hardship for them. Be sure and give them the amount of notice for new rent required by law.

4. You or your property manager should have a regular inspection

every year of your unit. Give proper notice and come prepared to make note of all repairs that will be needed.

5. Ask friends, family and associates about reliable repairman and contractors. Are you getting the best work for the best price? Relying on "I've always used..." could be costing you money. It's time to be open to new resources. Get references and plenty of them if you

Quick Reminder

Many renters think the property owners insurance may protect them if the unit is damaged and they lose their possessions or suffer injury.

Some landlords may carry protection for such circumstances but most likely do not.

I spoke with a local insurance agent and he gave me an estimate of what \$10,000 of renter's insurance might

run for one year.

For only about \$40 a tenant could conceivably have coverage for fire, theft, vandalism and hail or windstorm .

Some companies will add on floods, damage from a busted water pipe, damage from riots or civil upheaval, aircraft and vehicles, falling objects or damage resulting from frozen plumbing and there may be an extra charge.



Tips To Make Your Section 8 Experience Better

We want your experience with Section 8 to be satisfying to you as a landlord and successful to each party, us, the tenant, and you, in regards to housing a family.

Here are some suggestions to make that experience best for all concerned.

1. Read and complete all forms to avoid processing delays.
2. It is the duty of the owner to determine if the resident intends to remain or move at the term of the lease.
3. Each unit is inspected at least 60 days before the lease and contract expire. You are required to notify us when repairs are completed. Don't rely on the

tenant to do this. An abatement of payment affects you, not them, so make sure we are notified.

4. Please contact us as soon as you discover a vacant unit. Payments on vacant units must be returned.
5. Let us know promptly if you move and your address changes. We want to make sure your payments get to you in a timely manner.
6. We regret it when a payment is missed, but if it should be, notify us and please provide the tenant's name and address to expedite our records search for payment.

7. Keep track of expiration dates of HAP contracts and tenant leases.

8. It is illegal to accept "side payments" on contract rents.
9. Read the HAP contract thoroughly and if you do not understand any sections ask for clarification.

Section 8 is a triangle of 3 separate concerns coming together to benefit each.

We hope you will find it worthwhile and profitable to participate.

Thanks, But No Thanks

Time to pick up the rent rolls around. You knock on your tenant's door and when it opens,...SURPRISE!!! They have been good enough to paint the unit for you. Unfortunately, they painted the living room a bright bile green, the kitchen is hunter orange and you're too floored by the first two rooms to check out the rest of the house painted a warm chocolate brown.

To top it off, the tenant says, "The old walls needed painting and we did you a favor by doing it ourselves and buying the paint. By

the way, we're deducting the cost of paint from the rent and won't charge you anything for labor." Not.

Or how about a repair being made by the tenant's sister-in-law's neice's boyfriend who needs a little extra work and now the light switch in the garage sparks whenever the switch is thrown. No way.

Time to tell the tenant, "People, don't do me any favors." Make sure your lease specifies what alterations to the unit are and are not allowed and what to do for re-

pairs. Don't let your tenant call a repairman for a non-emergency repair unless you have given them permission.

You may not always be available to make a decision about emergency repair, either. Your tenant could make an expensive call simply because they did know what to do. Indicate to them beforehand when and who you would like them to call in case of a sudden repair that requires immediate attention.

Screening Advice

You may have gathered information on a prospective tenant by your application process and still are needing verification of credit or criminal history.

1. Please do not make the mistake of taking such information directly from the applicant themselves.

Credit reports, criminal checks and references can be doctored so it is always best to acquire such information from a verifiable neutral third party.

2. Don't be afraid to ask questions allowed by law. Better to ask in the beginning than find out the negative facts after damage has been done.

3. Even though you know an applicants family and may think well of them, do the background checks anyway. It shows you do not discriminate from one tenant to another and you can't judge people's dependability by their kin.



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We're on the Web!
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Mr. Wise graduated from MU School

Robert Wise to Speak Here in January!

Noted attorney on landlord-tenant law, Robert Wise of Kansas City, Mo., is scheduled to speak here in Mexico on January 30th. Sponsored by the Mexico Housing Authority and in conjunction with the Mexico Public Safety kick off for their new Crime-Free Neighborhoods program, Mr. Wise will be conducting a two hour seminar open to the public beginning at 1:00 p.m. and there will be a \$10.00 reservation fee. Please sign up to attend as soon as possible as space will be limited. Mexico Public Safety will sponsor the first session to address ways landlords and interested parties can make neighborhoods crime-free and drug-free. This is the first such program in the community and will be an invaluable educational source for those who desire to improve their property values and attractiveness to renters by making communities safe from crime and drugs.

of Law in 1975 and is a member of the Missouri Bar. He has extensive experience counseling property owners and managers on landlord-tenant law, collections, Fair Housing, Fair Debt Collection Practices Act and other areas pertaining to property law.

As the author of part of House Bill 361 which made possible more expeditious eviction involving drug activities, Mr. Wise was instrumental in drafting legislation changing landlord-tenant law for the first time since 1939.

He is presently a member of the Missouri Leadership Council of the National Federation of Independent Business and the Executive Director of Mid-America Crime Free, Inc.

WARNING!
Eviction in Missouri is only legal through a court action initiated by the property owner. Attempting a "self-help" eviction may result in the tenant suing the property owner for "forcible entry and detainer" and may result in the tenant recovering actual and punitive damages.