

# CONTROLLING DAMAGES

We tell prospective renters that each house is different and reflects the personality of the owner. For that reason they are not to expect standardized furnishings. Likewise each renter is different. Some are neat freaks, some are slob. Most are active Families with children. Children get bored. It would be nice if each time a renter checks into your house everything was just as they expected, they had a 100% enjoyable stay, and when they left the house was exactly as they found it. But, this is not a perfect world and things happen. Often these are no ones fault, they just happen. Billing someone for unavoidable costs far more in lost customers than it ever returns.

## WHAT WE WILL AND WILL NOT DO.

- 1) We will bill or deduct from any damage deposit the costs of damages due to willful misuse, neglect, or abuse.
- 2) We will not bill or deduct from any damage deposit the costs of damages due to (in our opinion): normal wear and tear or inadequate design. We will not bill for improper use where the proper use is not either obvious or instructions provided. We will not bill renters for minor damages that might be expected over the course of a years usage in a vacation rental home. We expect you the owner to use care in selecting the items in the home to provide furnishings of reasonable quality and durability. These rentals are usually to families with children and while you have a right to expect reasonable care, do not expect renters to treat poorly constructed furnishings with TLC.
- 3) We will require a cash damage deposit if you so specify.  
Normally we take only a credit card number to which we can bill extra charges. This is the way it is handled in the hotel industry and most of the resort industry. This keeps the up front price to the renter at a minimum and keeps your rentals to a maximum. The down side is that, if we bill the card when the renter claims that he is not the one who caused the damage, he can challenge the charge and the credit card company will disallow it. It is therefore harder to collect for damages. If you so specify, we will require a cash deposit for your house and will deduct any damages before returning the deposit. We WILL NOT accept any responsibility for errors in the determination of damages. We WILL pay the maid who cleans your house an additional fee for filling out an inspection report and we WILL charge your account \$35 for each deposit taken to offset administrative and additional maid costs. Damage deposits must be returned (Less any deductions) within 30 days by law.
- 4) We will not bill or deduct from damage deposits costs in excess of damages directly caused by the renter.
- 5) We will inspect and make recommendations for preventing damages as well as recommendations for better meeting your rental objectives.
- 6) We will review comment cards for problems. We monitor the condition of homes via comment cards and maid feedback for problems.
- 7) We will make available tools, supplies, and equipment necessary
  - Label makers
  - Frames & Laminators
  - Rental equipment

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## PREVENT PROBLEMS --- PLAN AHEAD

- 1) Expect more wear & tear than if you alone were using the house
  - A) Some items you might use 4 or 5 times a year will probably be used daily by vacationers. (Grills, Lawn Furniture, etc.)
  - B) Where you know to be careful with an old chair, for example, you can not expect every one else to know what you know. Renters will generally expect the furnishings to withstand heavy use.
- 2) Plan for wear & tear in your rental budget.

We suggest you set aside a fixed percentage (10%, 15% or more) of your net to keep the property maintained properly.
- 3) Furnish the house with the expectation of continuous use.

After all, that's what we are striving for, keeping it rented. If you furnish the house with appliances and furniture that have lived a full life, how can you expect them to withstand continuous use by vacationing families? Likewise, if you furnish with bargain basement appliances, how long do you expect them to last?
- 4) An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

In the few years we have been in business we have handled several thousand rentals. While we have had few cases of significant damage, we have experienced our share of problems. Nearly all could have been prevented by proper planning.

## PREVENTION CHECK LIST

Below I have listed several steps that you can take to significantly reduce unnecessary repair costs.

### HVAC

- 1) We suggest a HVAC maintenance contract with a company that will provide emergency service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- 2) Have on hand in a location accessible to the renters a supply of AC filters.
- 3) Have your heating and AC system serviced twice a year: Once just before summer and again just before it starts to get cold.
- 4) Have the circuit breakers in your electrical panel clearly labeled. If your AC has an external reset button, tape a note to that effect inside your electrical panel.
- 5) NEVER Put a note on or near the thermostat requesting a particular setting. We provide the maid with instructions. Summer settings should be 76 with the blower "ON" all the time. If you ask for the AC to be turned off, you significantly increase the probability of a freeze up and a resulting service call when the renters check in. This also causes the refrigerator to appear to not be working since it is trying to fight the heat of a non air conditioned house. We will laminate instructions & put in check in pouches.

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## REFRIGERATORS

6) Twice a year clean the refrigerator coils. Be sure the refrigerator is located where it has good air circulation around it. Do not store things in the space between the refrigerator and the wall or on top of the refrigerator. Use a refrigerator deodorant such as a box of baking soda.

## INSECTS

7) Consider a annual contract with a reliable exterminator.

8) Scorpions are a constant problem in this area. To reduce them: remove all wood piles and bark from within 20 feet of the house. Spread a 10' band of Dursban around the outside.

9) Spider webs are another constant problem especially in a house that has been vacant for long periods. Simply knocking down the webs does no good, they will just build them back. Spray the area with liquid seven. This may require several treatments to eliminate the problem.

10) Eliminate and standing water or damp areas. These are mosquito breeding areas.

## SCREENS & GLASS DOORS

11) Screen doors should have a plate of some type across the middle to facilitate pushing them open. If, when standing in front of the door with your arm bent at the elbow you touch screen wire, the screens WILL get pushed out over time. Doors should use the minimum spring force necessary to close them, otherwise the will get damaged.

12) The best thing to do with screens for sliding glass doors is to remove them. They encourage people to keep the door open with the AC on. I have yet to see one that stays on the track reliably. Be sure to put something on glass to prevent someone walking through it.

13) Porch screens below waist level should somehow be protected.

## SEMI-ANNUAL CLEANING and CHECK UP

14) The routine cleaning the house gets after each rental can not be expected to be a "deep cleaning". You are expected to provide or arrange for a thorough cleaning at least twice a year. This should include:

- Light fixtures and ceiling fans (Exterior as well as interior)

- Under and inside couches and chairs

- AC vents

- Windows (Inside and OUT)

15) At the same time all appliances should be checked for any quirks ;

- Electrical interlocks should work properly without any special action

- (No one wants to pay a repairman to "Close the door"

- Microwaves

- Dishwashers

- Washers/Dryers

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## GENERAL

16) If you do have any appliances with unusual characteristics, be sure to leave the renters specific instructions. Please also provide us with a copy of anything you provide them.

17) Provide instructions for anything that might not be normal for a renter, especially for anything that has peculiar characteristics. This can be in the form of little signs or a book. If a book, be sure it is easily recognized and easily found. Please provide us with a copy of everything.

Don't flush

Bring chairs back from dock

Wipe your feet

These help but they will not eliminate the problem.

18) Breakers need to be clearly and permanent labeled.

19) Please do not leave trash containers. We expect renters to take out their own trash as most of the people who live in the area have to do. When large trash containers are provided instead of just plastic bags they tend to let the trash accumulate. Even if you have trash pick-up, no one wants to check in and find someone else's trash.

20) Leave a supply of common replacement items such as: light bulbs, batteries for the smoke alarms and remotes, and HVAC filters. Often renters will replace them as needed.

21) Leave cleaning equipment and maintenance supplies. If someone spills something on the carpet, it needs to be cleaned up then, not a few days later by the maid.

## LAWNS

22) We strongly suggest a routine lawn service year round. First impressions are lasting ones and weeds, leaves, or sticks scattered around the area take away from that impression

## CARPETS

All entrances should have a mat outside and a throw rug inside.

Heavy traffic areas should have runners ( Be sure these things do not curl up)

Mud scrapers

Outside showers

Wooden decks and stairs.

Keep grass from becoming mud.

Use common sense in selecting color and materials.

Apply stain guarding

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## DISHES, POTS & PANS

Are they too fragile, or do they require special care?

## GRILLS

Last about 1 year. You may use 4 - 5 times a year but vacationers will use constantly

Be sure to furnish good cleaning brush

If charcoal, provide a place to dump ashes and let them know where.

## LOCK UP CLOSETS

Offer a challenge to kids. Use dead bolt locks.

Don't lock up the breakers.

## LAWN PATIO & DOCK FURNITURE

Durable consider the 300 pound renter

Easy to clean

Chairs will get taken to the dock and will blow off. Provide secured chairs. Float

## FURNISHINGS THAT NEED SPECIAL CARE

If you have a table leg that is loose or a lock that is hard to work or anything similar, FIX IT. It is not going to get better and it is unreasonable to expect a vacationer to give it special care.

## WOOD FLOORS

Sand gravel will destroy it.

Furniture will get moved

Floor protectors need to be in good shape.

## DOOR STOPS

Prevent wall damage BUT be sure it does not cause door damage

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## LIGHTING FIXTURES

Not too fragile  
Bulbs easy to change  
Long life bulbs  
Lamps with glass pieces not at ground level

## LIGHTNING ARRESTORS

All Appliances susceptible  
TV - VCR - Microwave - Cordless Phones -

## STOVES

EYE COVERS A No-No  
Timers OK  
Elements OK

## REPAIRS

Scheduled repairs , improvements Contractor price +20% +\$35 per bid

Emergency repairs Contractor price only (if you have done your part.)