

Kenosha Landlord Association

A Local Chapter of the Wisconsin Apartment Association



DISCLAIMER: The Kenosha Landlord Association publishes this newsletter to create awareness of issues relating to the rental housing industry. Information is compiled from a variety of sources and the views and concerns expressed by the contributors do not necessarily reflect those of the editor or the Association. When necessary, we suggest you consult an attorney.

CATCHING FIRE: WINTER FIRE PREVENTION TIPS LANDLORDS CAN'T IGNORE

By Tracey March

Winter fires cause more than \$2,000,000,000 (that's 2 BIL-LION) in property losses every year. The loss of life is considerable—more than 900 people die in winter home fires. As a rental owner it's important to know what the hazards are and to communicate that information to your tenants.

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Kenosha Landlord Association, Inc. P.O. Box 1505, Kenosha, WI 53141

Visit Us At: www.kenoshalandlordassociation.ws



Fire prevention in general is important for any landlord or homeowner to address. In fact, I've written about <u>fire prevention for landlords and property managers before</u>. However, a fire is more likely to happen during the winter for three reasons: we heat our food more, we heat our homes more, and many of us decorate our houses with flammable materials and candles. That combination doesn't have to end in tragedy.

Here is some important information to communicate to your tenants so you can reduce the likelihood that your rental property will catch fire.

Most fires start in the kitchen, often from food left unattended on the cook top.

Remind your tenants to:

Never leave their stove unattended when they are using it. Keep their ovens and cooktops clean, as grease and other debris can ignite easily.

Keep papers, plastic bags, and other materials at least 3 feet away from the stove.

I write this having watched a tea towel in my kitchen catch fire just last week. It happened quickly, and on one was fooling around or goofing off. Fortunately, we reacted quickly and the damage was limited to this:

Heaters are the second leading cause of winter home fires. Remind your tenants that they should:

Never put anything close to their heat sources.

Avoid using extension cords on a portable heater.

Always turn off portable heaters when leaving the rental home or going to bed.

Always follower manufacturer instructions.

Winter home fires peak in December and January, during

Continued on page 3

3/08



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CATCHING FIRE: WINTER FIRE PREVENTION TIPS LANDLORDS CAN'T IGNORE



the holidays. Remind your tenants that they should: Make sure their christmas trees are well watered and placed away from heat sources.

Always turn off their christmas tree lights when they aren't at home or when they go to bed. Avoid using real candles, instead opting for batteryoperated candles.

If candles must

be used, NEVER leave them unattended if they are lit, place them in a stable location far away from anything that could catch fire, and always put them out when leaving the room or going to bed.

NEVER deep-fry turkeys or other foods indoors, in a garage, or on a balcony or deck. Deep fried turkey is delicious, but do it away from any structures in an uncovered location.

Finally, there are some things that you as the rental owner should be doing at least once a year, and also before a new tenant moves in:

Regularly inspect your rental property, have all of your heat sources checked, and change filters, check gas lines.

Check smoke detectors and monoxide detectors to make sure they are working. Consider having your tenants sign an agreement that they will not disable or remove them.

Make sure fire extinguishers are in working order and comply

Continued from page 2 with state and local regulations.

Now's a good time to check that you have a rental owner's insurance policy on your property. Also consider requiring your tenants to carry renter's insurance.

Here's another tip: FEMA has a holiday season fire prevention page that has some great downloadable fire safety posters you can send or email to your tenants.

Dec 14, 3013 From: www.rentalpropertyreporter.com

Have Fun

By.....

KLA Looking For Members To Serve On **Committees** If Interested



Please Contact A Board Member

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Rental Property Tax Deductions

January 6, 2014 By Bob Cain

How much money are you costing yourself? I don't mean in lost rent or vacant units. I'm talking about on your taxes. Most residential investment property owners divide the cost of their real estate between land and building, then depreciate the building over 27.5 years in equal installments. If that's all you do, you are most likely leaving a big wad of money on the table.

Not every part of your rental property is real estate. You have a host of other property that isn't real estate and that can be depreciated over a much shorter period of time. Plus, there is a provision of the tax law that allows you to deduct a huge portion and possibly the entire income from one or more of your properties.

Look at the depreciation schedule below from Internal Revenue Service instructions.

 $\label{eq:Refrigerators} Refrigerators, ranges, dishwashers, carpeting, furniture-5 \\ years$

Land improvements (sidewalks, fences, landscaping shrubbery, septic systems, water pipes) – 15 years

Computers and peripherals – 5 years

Typewriters, adding machines, copiers – 5 years Automobiles and trucks under 13,000 lbs. – 5 years

Carpeting—5 years

Office furniture (desks, chairs, file cabinets, etc.) – 7 years Residential rental property building – 27.5 years Non-residential rental property – 39 years

In addition, there are numerous other items that you can find at irs.gov

You are allowed by law to separate all of these pieces of property from the value of the building and depreciate them individually on IRS Form 4562. That can make or save you thousands of dollars a year on your taxes.

But there is one more deduction that could even mean a free vehicle for your rental property business. It is the Section 179 deduction

The total amount you can elect to deduct under Section 179 for most property placed in service in 2013 generally cannot be more than \$500,000. If you acquire and place in service more than one item of qualifying property during the year, you can allocate the Section 179 deduction among the items in any way you want, as long as the total deduction is not more than \$500,000. You do not have to claim the full \$500,000. Qualified real property that you chose to treat as section 179 real property is limited to \$250,000 of the maximum deduction of \$500,000 for 2013.

A likely Section 179 deduction for rental owners might be a new vehicle. The IRS explains it as follows:

Many vehicles that by their nature are not likely to be used



for personal purposes qualify for full Section 179 deduction including the following vehicles:

Heavy "non-SUV" vehicles with a cargo area at least six feet in interior length (this area must not be easily accessible from the passenger area.) To give an example, many pickups with full-sized cargo beds will qualify (although some "extended cab" pickups may have beds that are too small to qualify).

Vehicles that can seat nine-plus passengers behind the driver's seat (i.e.: Hotel / Airport shuttle vans, etc.).

Vehicles with: (1) a fully-enclosed driver's compartment / cargo area, (2) no seating at all behind the driver's seat, and (3) no body section protruding more than 30 inches ahead of the leading edge of the windshield. In other words, a classic cargo van.

So how does that work? I would not begin to try to explain it. That's a job for tax experts. So don't take my word for this because I am not an accountant, and I know there probably is some fine print that we need to pay attention to. Section 179, though, can and has offset thousands of dollar in rental income for many rental property owners. So if you bought a \$40,000 pickup for your rental business, that has the potential to offset \$40,000 in net rental income. Don't have that much rental income? Ask your accountant how to spread it out over the five years that you are entitled to depreciate it along with the Section 179 deduction.

Think about the things you bought for your rental properties in 2013. How many of them can be depreciated? How much money is just sitting there on the table waiting for you to snatch it up? Ask your accountant or expert tax preparer. It's our right to take as many deductions as the law allows.

From www.rentalpropertyreporter.com





WHAT IS HOMESTEAD CREDIT?

Overview

What is the Homestead Credit?

The Homestead Credit is a tax benefit for renters and homeowners with low or moderate incomes. It is designed to lessen the impact of rent and property taxes. Qualifying persons can get back some or all of their state taxes withheld during the year. Those who do not have earnings, or whose earnings were too small to have taxes withheld, can get extra cash back from the State.

The main criteria for eligibility include the following: Rented or owned a home – and lived in the home – in Wisconsin during 2013. The home may be a house, an apartment, a rented room, a mobile home, a farm, or a nursing home room. The home may not be exempt from property taxes;

Legal resident of Wisconsin for all of 2013;

Household income less than \$24,680 for 2013. The income limit may be lower, depending on how much was paid in rent or property taxes;

At least 18 years old on December 31, 2013; Cannot be claimed as a dependent on anyone else's federal income tax return for 2013 (unless claimant is at least 62 years old).

What counts as household income?

Household income includes all income reportable for tax purposes, plus certain nontaxable income, less a deduction of \$500 for dependents who lived with the claimant for at least six months of 2013. Examples of nontaxable income counted in 'household income' include Social Security, Unemployment Compensation, child support, IRA contributions, and nontaxable scholarships.

How much can individuals and families get back from the Homestead Credit?

The amount of the credit depends on income and on the amount of rent or property taxes. In general, the credit is higher when income is lower and/or when rent or property taxes are higher. The maximum Homestead Credit is \$1168.

Does the Homestead Credit affect eligibility for welfare? Do welfare benefits affect eligibility for the Homestead Credit?

The Homestead Credit – and other tax credits – do not count as income in determining eligibility for benefits such as

W-2, Medicaid, Food Stamps, SSI, or public or subsidized housing.

Cash welfare benefits can reduce the Homestead Credit. The benefits that affect the Homestead Credit include Wisconsin Works (W-2), county relief, and Kinship Care. Countable rent or property taxes are reduced by 1/12 for each month in which cash wel-

fare benefits were received during 2013. Schedule H includes information on how to handle this.

Claiming the **Homestead Credit** What is the procedure for claiming the Homestead Credit?

Complete a Wisconsin Homestead Credit Claim (Schedule H-EZ or Schedule H) to get the Homestead Credit. (Schedule H instructions). Most claimants may use Schedule H-EZ, a simplified form. If filing a Wisconsin income tax return, attach

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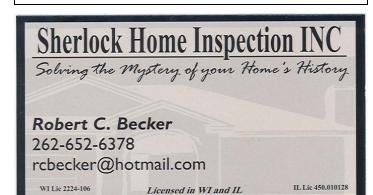
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Landlord/Crime Free Multi-Housing Rental Seminar

Tuesday, March 11, 2014 Wednesday, March 12, 2014

6pm to 10pm

The class will be split into two 4-hour sessions.

You will need to attend both sessions

Location: Boys and Girls Club 1330 52nd St. Kenosha, WI 53140

The KPD Crime Prevention Unit and the Kenosha Landlord Association designed this Seminar to help landlords make better decisions when managing their rental units.

The following topics will be discussed:

- Property Maintenance Codes
- Crime Prevention Techniques
- Applicant Screening
- Leases and Evictions
- Crime Free Lease Addendums
- Process Serving
- C.P.T.E.D. (Crime Prevention through Environmental Design)
- Fire Safety
- Waste and Disposal

This seminar will help landlords and property managers in the following ways:

- Satisfied tenants build stable neighborhoods
- Active management leads to less turnover
- Stabilized property values and rents
- Lower maintenance and repair costs
- Everyone is safer
- Peace of mind from spending less time on crisis control.

To register for the seminar please call: Crime prevention Unit at 657-3937

or e-mail: watch@kenoshapolice.com.

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WHAT IS HOMESTEAD CREDIT?

Continued from page 5

Schedule H to the return. Use Form 1, 1A, or 1NPR (not WI-Z). If claimant is not required to file an income tax return, she/he may file the Homestead Credit Claim by itself.

Claimants who own their home should attach a legible copy of their property tax bill.

Claimants who rent their home should attach a <u>rent</u> <u>certificate</u>. The rent certificate is a tax form which the landlord needs to complete and sign. It includes information about the rented home and about the amount of rent paid.

If the landlord refuses to sign the rent certificate, the claimant should mark the box in the claimant (renter) section to indicate this, and complete lines 1 through 13c on the rent certificate. Attach the rent certificate, along with copies of canceled checks or money order receipts, to verify rent paid for 2013. The Homestead Credit can be claimed on-line at no cost, through the Department of Revenue website

Can people get the Homestead Credit for prior years, if they were eligible but didn't claim it?

The Homestead Credit can be claimed for up to four years following the original due date of a tax return. See the WI <u>Department of Revenue FAQ</u> for details on deadlines.

If not required to file an income tax return for the year in which the credit is being claimed, just file Schedule H and supporting documents (rent certificate or property tax bill); If claiming the Homestead Credit for a year in which a Wisconsin income tax return was filed, write "Income Tax Return Separately Filed" at the top of Schedule H. Attach a complete copy of the Wisconsin income tax return, including copies of all documents originally filed with that return. Write "Duplicate" at the top of the Wisconsin tax return.

Send Schedule H (and duplicate tax forms) to the Wisconsin Department of Revenue, P.O. Box 34, Madison,

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Where can workers get help filing for the Homestead Credit?

Please note that the links to tax preparation information are to external websites that may not yet be updated; read those sites carefully to be sure the information is current.

The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program provides free tax assistance in counties throughout Wisconsin.

Taxpayer Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) provides free tax assistance for the elderly, as well as for persons eligible for the Earned Income Credit or the Homestead Credit.

Follow this link for information on <u>VITA and TCE site</u> locations and hours

Further information on the Homestead Credit

Frequently Asked Questions about the Homestead Credit from Cooperative Extension, 2013

<u>Information about the Homestead Credit</u> from the Wisconsin

Department of Revenue (English and Spanish)

Download tax forms and publications

<u>Schedule H Schedule H-EZ</u> (<u>Schedule H and H-EZ instructions</u>)

Rent certificate

Form 1 (Form 1 Instructions)

Form 1A (Form 1A Instructions)

Form 1NPR (Form 1NPR Instructions)

Forms available as fill-in forms can be found on the <u>Wisconsin</u> <u>Department of Revenue website</u>.

From: http://fyi.uwex.edu/eitc/8-2/





Justice Department Settles Lawsuit Against Wisconsin Landlord and Former Manager for Discriminating on the Basis of Race

Department of Justice, Office of Public Affairs FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, Thursday, November 29, 2012

Justice Department Settles Lawsuit Against Wisconsin Landlord and Former Manager for Discriminating on the Basis of Race

Justice Department Settles Lawsuit Against Wisconsin Landlord and Former Manager for Discriminating on the Basis of Race

The Justice Department announced today that the manager and owner of the Geneva Terrace Apartments Inc. in La Crosse, Wis., have agreed to pay \$57,500 to settle a lawsuit alleging they violated the Fair Housing Act by discriminating against African-Americans who were seeking to rent apartments at the complex.

The complaint, filed in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Wisconsin on Oct. 26, 2011, alleged that Nicolai Quinn, the manager of the apartment complex, told prospective African-American renters that apartments were not available when they were, while telling prospective white renters that there were apartments available.

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"Nobody should be denied housing in this country because of their race." said Thomas E. Perez, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights. "The Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in housing on the basis of race, and we will continue to vigorously enforce the law to ensure access to housing regardless of the race of an applicant."



"The De-

partment of Justice and this U.S. Attorney's Office will do everything possible to ensure that everyone has the freedom to choose where they live, regardless of race," said John W. Vaudreuil, the U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Wisconsin.

"It's against the law to misrepresent a home's availability because of race," said John Trasviña, HUD's Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity. "HUD and the Justice Department will continue to take action against anyone who violates the nation's fair housing laws."

As alleged in the complaint, in 2009 and 2010, Quinn told an African-American couple who were interested in renting an apartment in Geneva Terrace that there were no apartments available, even though the

complex had posted a sign adver-

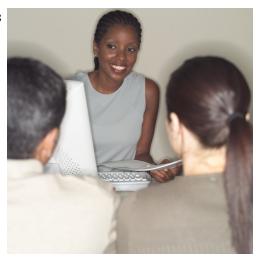
Continued on page 9



Justice Department Settles Lawsuit Against Wisconsin Landlord and Former Manager for Discriminating on the Basis of Race

Continued from page 8

tising vacancies. The couple found it suspicious and asked a white friend to contact the complex. Quinn told the white friend that he had available apartments. The couple then reported their experience to the Metropolitan Milwaukee Fair



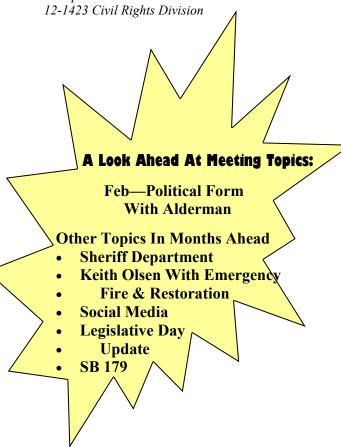
Housing Council (MMFHC), a nonprofit fair housing organization. MMFHC conducted fair housing tests, which confirmed that Quinn was telling African Americans that apartments were not available while showing available apartments to white persons.

The couple also filed a complaint with HUD, which conducted an investigation and, after issuing a charge of discrimination, referred the matter to the Department of Justice.

Under the terms of the settlement, which is subject to approval by the U.S. District Court, the defendants will pay the complainants \$47,500 in damages. Defendants will also pay a civil penalty of \$10,000 to the United States. Defendant Geneva Terrace Apartments LLC will also develop and maintain non-discrimination housing policies and attend fair housing training.

The federal Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in housing on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, familial status, national origin and disability.

Fighting housing discrimination is a top priority of the Justice Department. The federal Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in housing on the basis of race, color, religion, sex familial status, national origin and disability. More information about the Civil Rights Division and the laws it enforces is available at www.justice.gov/crt. Individuals who believe that they have been victims of housing discrimination or have information related to this lawsuit can call the Housing Discrimination Tip Line at 1-800-896-7743, e-mail the Justice Department at fair-housing@usdoj.gov or contact the Department of Housing and Urban Development at 1-800-669-9777.



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Kenosha Landlord Association

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Next Meeting



6618-39th Ave

On our regular 3rd Wednesday the month

Feb 19, 2013 6:30 P.M. for meeting

Appetizers & Networking at 6:30 pm Meeting will start at 7 pm

City Council Learn Their Platform. Meet candidates Learn about their visions of where they want the city to go. Open to Public.

www.kenoshalandlordassociation.ws

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