

NAHP Update

'Greening' Helps Everyone's Bottom Line

BY CATHERINE A. SMITH

Green used to be just a color. It had many shades, but, still, it was just a color.

Now green has a whole new meaning, and shades of meaning. It suggests concern for the earth. It is an acknowledgment that some resources are finite, and some others are just very costly.

The old notion that 'someone else' is responsible for caring about the planet or about the sustainability of resources has been replaced by the idea that we all share in the responsibility of reducing our carbon footprint by 'going green.'

And if caring about the earth isn't incentive enough, it doesn't hurt that, with a little up-front investment, going green can also earn you some green—the cash kind. Conserving energy and water, reducing waste and encouraging walking over driving are all ways to reduce costs, for businesses as well as for residents.

How are you communicating to your residents the importance of a green lifestyle? Your company may invest in ENERGY STAR® appliances, but if your residents don't understand how to maintain these appliances—well, it's like pouring



that eventual return-on-investment right down the drain.

TIPS FOR CONSERVING WATER AND ENERGY

Property owners can clearly benefit from having residents conserve water and energy—your monthly water bill can attest to that. But they have to understand what these conservation measures are.

Here are some things you

can ask residents to do to conserve water:

1. A small drip from a faucet can waste 20 gallons of water per day. Larger leaks can waste hundreds of gallons. Ask them to report dripping faucets immediately.

2. Don't use the toilet as an ashtray or wastebasket. Every time someone flushes a cigarette butt, facial tissue or other small bit of trash, five to seven gal-

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NATIONAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION (NAHMA)—Protecting the Interests of Affordable Housing Property Managers and Owners



lons of water is wasted.

3. A four-minute shower uses approximately 20 to 40 gallons of water. Suggest people be conscious of how long they shower. Some water utili-

every day. It adds up!

5. Suggest rinsing razors in a few inches of warm water in the sink instead of under running water. This works just as well as running water, with far

7. When washing dishes by hand, don't leave the water running for rinsing. Wash everything, and then rinse with a spray device or pan of hot water.

8. Don't let the faucet run while you clean vegetables. Just rinse them in a stoppered sink or a pan of clean water

9. Keep a bottle of drinking water in the fridge. Running tap water to cool it off for drinking water is wasteful.

Water is just one costly thing to conserve. Your electrical and heating bills can come down significantly if residents do the following (suggested by the nonprofit, Green America):

1. Turn off the lights.

2. Show the fridge some love. The refrigerator is one of the biggest energy-users in a home, and if it was built before 1993, it's a huge energy hog. Clean the coils on your fridge every six months, and take up unused space inside with jugs of water, which will hold in the cold better.

3. Wash clothes in cold water. It gets them just as clean as hot and cuts the washer's energy use in half.

4. If the heating and air-conditioning thermostat is programmable, dig out that owner's manual and learn how to maximize the efficiency of the heating and cooling systems.

5. Air dry dishes. Using the dishwasher instead of washing dishes by hand can save water, but if you let the drying cycle run, you're wasting energy and money. Skip the drying cycle and let your dishes air dry.

ty companies offer free timers people can put in their showers so they know if they've gone past four minutes.

4. Turn off the water after wetting a toothbrush, and fill a glass for mouth rinsing. This seems like a small thing, but imagine if everybody in your property is letting water flow for several minutes each and

less waste.

6. Use the dishwasher and clothes washer for only full loads. Most makers of dishwashing soap recommend not pre-rinsing dishes, which is a big water savings. With clothes washers, avoid the permanent press cycle, which uses an added five gallons for the extra rinse.

IT WOULD ALSO PROHIBIT owners and operators of HUD-assisted housing, or housing whose financing is insured by HUD, from inquiring about the sexual orientation or gender identity of an applicant for, or occupant of, the dwelling.

Newer, more effective and efficient dishwashers allow you to skip the step of pre-rinsing your dishes before you load them in the dishwasher.

6. Eliminate “phantom load.” Many electronics still suck energy even when they’re turned off—such as powering that little clock on your microwave when it’s not in use. Unplug your electronics or plug them into a power strip and switch it off to save on this “phantom load.”

7. **ADVANCED:** Use a Kill-A-Watt meter to measure the energy use of appliances and gadgets, even when they’re turned off. You can also keep track of your home’s entire energy use with a whole-house energy monitor.

GOING GREEN SAVES RESIDENTS MONEY

Residents who live in afford-

able housing need every penny. If they own cars, a significant portion of their income is probably going to pay for gas. You can encourage the use of public transportation, bicycles and even walking by helping residents do the math: what does it really cost to operate and maintain a car? Could that money be stretched further by cutting down on the amount of miles put on a car?

In many cases, especially in areas where public transportation is plentiful, the answer will be yes.

Drivers also save gas by driving the speed limit, avoiding speeding up and braking hard, and keeping tires properly inflated.

Going green is also about having a healthy indoor environment. According to the National Center for Healthy Housing, the seven principles

of a healthy home are: dry, clean, pest-free, safe, contaminant-free, ventilated and maintained.

One way to have a healthy home and save money is to make your own cleaning solutions. Green America has a great list of non-toxic, readily available supplies residents can use to replace costly commercial (and often toxic) cleaners. To read about their “Basic 10” products (which include vinegar, lemon juice and other common items) that “clean almost anything,” go to <http://www.greenamerica.org/ivinggreen/greencleaners.cfm>.

There are many ways property managers and residents can benefit from going green. It just takes a conscious effort and a little education to reap big rewards. **NU**
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NOW IS THE TIME!

COQ Award Applications DUE NOV 9

NAHMA’s Communities of Quality® Award Program, now in its 20th year, is accepting applications. The due date is November 9, 2012, so consider working on your application right away.

The pride you put into your properties deserves to be reflected in your submitting a COQ application for it. The prestige of winning a national COQ Award is just one of many program benefits.

For more information and application details, go to www.nahma.org and click on the Communities of Quality® logo.

NAHMA

Partnering with Residents for Compliance

While owners and managers are responsible for ensuring a tax credit property or other affordable housing community remains in compliance, the owner cannot do so without the assistance and cooperation of residents.

Residents are responsible for openly and honestly disclosing sources of income and assets, reporting maintenance issues, notifying the manager of household changes including changes in student status, and following the lease and “house” rules.

Because of this critical role, the resident is best viewed as not only a customer, but also a partner. There is a difference: partners work together reasonably and responsibly for mutual benefit.

Below are a few steps that can help transform residents from customers to partners.

1. Communicate expectations clearly to the resident. Communication should be ongoing. Nonetheless, there are two key opportunities to communicate compliance requirements. The first is during the initial application; the second is when the lease and other documents are signed.

The information shared should not simply be about what is required, but why. In

clear and simple terms, residents should understand that some requirements are simply part of qualifying for a unit assisted by a particular program.

Many residents may not care about the rules the owner and manager have to follow. However, they need to know that cooperating with compliance requirements ensures that their housing remains available and affordable. Simply saying “because you need to give it to me” may not be enough to ensure cooperation.

As a monitoring agency, the Ohio Housing Finance Agency receives frequent calls and emails from residents. Many of the complaints result from residents not being provided a good explanation of a compliance requirement. We readily admit, though, that the clearest explanation does not always satisfy a resident.

2. Provide information in writing and explain it in person during the application or recertification process. Residents should know that the information and cooperation they provide to you is essential to your obligations, and ultimately their cooperation helps you help them.

3. Remind residents that it is always better to ask for permission than to beg for forgiveness. This applies to

reporting maintenance issues and making changes to the household composition, among others. What seems a small change to a resident—for example, moving in another household member—may have non-compliance implications. Most property managers would rather have an opportunity to discuss a possible issue and avoid non-compliance than to “fix” a problem later.

4. Be responsive to resident needs. In other words, show residents they are valued by providing good service. The more a resident thinks you care, the more he or she will care about helping you. At least that is the idea!

5. Send out income recertification and student status certification notices early and often. This allows residents time to find documents and schedule appointments. It can also be a great help if office hours are extended beyond normal business hours.

6. Residents should know how to report a maintenance issue, both during work hours and after.

7. Avoid “punishing” residents for reporting problems or issues, providing the issues are not occurring regularly. The notification should be treated as an opportunity to avoid non-compliance. There

is often a perception at some properties that the resident will always be charged for maintenance problems or treated as if they have done something wrong, even if the maintenance issue is one the resident could do nothing to avoid.

8. While it seems obvious, it is not always so—talk about and treat your residents as partners and valued customers. Appropriate language, attitudes and behaviors will help ensure residents help you stay in compliance. There are other added benefits, such as lower turnover and word of mouth advertising that come when residents are treated as customers who have a choice in where they live.

The complexity of financing affordable housing communities has increased the relevance of compliance. Owners and managers who are most successful develop a relationship resembling a partnership with their residents to ensure all of the compliance requirements are met. **NU**

Brian Carnahan is the Director of the Ohio Housing Finance Agency’s Office of Program Compliance, Christine Bennett is the agency’s Compliance Coordinator and Trainer, Arthera “T.J.” Burgess is the Asset Management and Technical Assistance Manager for the agency.

Working Against Drug Dealers

Tips for Prevention and Response

Drug dealers in vulnerable residential properties where they can remain undetected, or at least unreported, for as long as possible is “good business” for them. The more intimidating drug dealers are, the more successful they will be.

At the same time, property managers can ill afford to have drug dealers in their midst. Property managers must be prepared before drug dealers encroach on a site and have a plan to rebuff the efforts of drug dealers. The drug dealers could be local individuals or even property residents.

One important tool should be getting written accounts (Narcotics Complaints) of drug activity for the police. Naturally, the anonymity of the complainant is critical. But here are some suggestions on what should be included in a written report to provide law enforcement with the tools they need to find the bad guys.

- Identify the busiest time when drugs are sold;
- Include the type of drug packaging that your maintenance staff, your tenants and you are finding in or around your property (tin foil with stamps, small vials with colored tops, and other forms of packaging). This will give law enforcement an indication of

what types of drugs are potentially being sold and/or used;

- Give the exact apartment number, hallway or outdoor location where drugs are sold if known;

- Give the best possible description of the most typical customers. This will allow the police to assign an undercover officer who is likely to be unnoticed because he or she will be able to blend in;

- Give precise and complete descriptions of the drug dealers like weight, height and colors of skin and hair. (Remember: each person, including drug dealers, usually has a distinctive feature like a tattoo, hairstyle, scar or piece of jewelry that lets the police zero in on the main culprits);

- Give the locations of look-outs if observed or known;
- If you know the name, or street name, of the drug dealer, take the plunge and write it down.

You can create your own Narcotics Complaint form or use a form provided by the local police.

Remember, under no circumstances should the complainant’s name, company or other identifying information appear on such a complaint for the safety of the complainant.

Another tool and great crime deterrent is making sure

the property is well lit

- At all doors to each building;
- Alongside each alley between buildings;
- In every hallway of each building;
- At several points in each driveway and parking lot; and
- Along the public sidewalks, which means coordinating with local government.

Never confront drug dealers. Personal safety is paramount for the property managers, maintenance staff and innocent residents.

Spend money on security cameras wisely. Here are some suggestions:

- Buy only what you need and can afford;
- Plan on a 25 percent annual replacement cost, plus monthly maintenance costs;
- Regular security cameras are generally unclear after dark, which is when most criminal activity occurs;
- Extra features like “pan, tilt, and zoom” are still surprisingly expensive;
- Be sure to angle your cameras to catch the license plate numbers as vehicles enter and exit your property; and
- Extra recorders and monitors are luxuries. **NU**

Timothy Vance is the President of Housing Crime Consultants, Inc. This article first appeared in SAHMA’s Outlook newsletter. Reprinted with permission.

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Loyalty and Learning Equal Success

NAME: Carol Breinholt, NAHP, SHCM, CPO

POSITION: Regional Manager, Southern Utah Regional Office, Richfield, Utah

MANAGEMENT COMPANY: Community Housing Services, Salt Lake City, Utah

DATE OF NAHP: 1996

Carol Breinholt “didn’t know anything about property management” when her daughter talked her into applying for a job with Community Housing Services (CHS). That was 27 years ago.

“When I first started out, it was just Phil Carroll [president of CHS] and I, with two properties,” she said.

Back then, Breinholt “did everything—cleaning, landscaping, managing. I hand-wrote all certifications and figured the HAPs by hand.”

“I attended every training ever offered,” she said. She credits the company’s commitment to training with its growth and the stability of its workforce. In the time she’s been with CHS, the company has grown to “22-plus properties in Utah with one in Minnesota, and 80 employees,” she said. Breinholt is the direct supervisor for 14 properties all over Utah.

“In this job, you continuously learn,” she said, “and even in repeat trainings, I always learn something new. I love for my managers and their employees to get all the training they can,

especially considering all the day-to-day challenges associated with the regulatory and compliance issues.” This includes the conferences offered by Rocky AHMA, as well as its webinars, which Breinholt said she loves.

“Training helps retain employees because your commitment to it makes everybody feel important. Our employees know we have high standards, and also that they have tons of support. When they first come on, they wonder, ‘how am I ever going to learn all this? What am I going to do?’

“I tell them, ‘it’s a hard job, but you are not in it by yourself. People will help you every step of the way.’”

Breinholt loves the work environment at CHS and

intends to stay with the company. “I want to continue learning and doing what I’m doing, and as the company expands, new opportunities may be available to me, if I want to make a change. I don’t intend to leave. It’s been a wonderful ride.”

Breinholt added, “I think this industry’s great.” It means a lot to be able to work in ways that help people better their lives. Our elderly residents love where they live, which is very gratifying. Our properties are so well maintained that people can be proud of where they live, which increases their self-esteem.”

“Anybody affiliated with CHS can have a good head start, if they’re willing to take it.” **NU**

PROTECTING THE INTERESTS OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROPERTY MANAGERS AND OWNERS

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