



## Frequently Asked Questions: Living in a House

### How do we take care of our trash?

Lexington ordinance has some very specific provisions regarding trash. Each house has a roll cart which must be put out no sooner than 7:00 pm the night before pickup, and must be rolled back no later than 7:00 pm the day of pickup. That is, you can't leave the trash cart by the street all the time – nobody wants to be walking by your trash all the time. *Failure to roll the trash cart back to the house on non-pickup days can result in tickets and fines, so please take this seriously.* If you have more trash than fits in the dumpster, bag it up in one or two heavy duty bags (we recommend “contractor bags”), make sure it's securely tied, and set it by the roll cart on trash pickup days; each bag can be a maximum of 50 pounds.

Days for trash pickup at most properties are as follows:

State, University, Conn Terrace, Waller	MONDAY
Prall, Montmullin	MONDAY
E. Maxwell	TUESDAY
Hill 'n Dale	MONDAY
Crescent	THURSDAY
Grayson Lake Drive	FRIDAY

### What about trash around the property?

We want everyone to have a good time, and outdoor get-togethers are a big part of that. However, we've noticed a growing trend among young people of just throwing cup, cans, and bottles on the ground. This is baffling to us: the trash can is, after all, an ancient concept, and works very well, so we don't understand how its non-use. It is efficient conceptually: one throws the cups, cans, etc., in the trash can once, and the whole issue goes away, as opposed to throwing the trash on the ground and getting up early the next morning with your head pounding and going around picking up trash and putting it in a TRASH CAN. Light heartedness aside, and just to be clear, **if we have to pick up the trash for you, we charge at a rate of \$2 per piece:** we don't want to pick up your trash! The city of Lexington has some very strong feelings about trash in the yard – they're against it. Hence there are some rather strong ordinances on the subject and they apply to you. So please be responsible, and be a good neighbor: keep trash in its place.



## **What about trash in the yard that we didn't put there?**

It's your responsibility to keep the yards picked up *regardless* of who put the trash there. It's very annoying to pick up after other people, which is why littering is illegal and why we charge if we have to pick up for you, but our society has collectively decided that it doesn't want to be awash in trash. City Code Enforcement can issue citations for trash in yards, so please be responsible and don't just walk by litter: pick it up!

## **What about cigarette butts?**

Cigarette butts are trash, and we certainly don't want to be picking them up after you. You can get a small metal pail from the Dollar store or other hardware store, fill it halfway full of sand or dirt, and put your butts out in it when you're done with them. If you then empty the butts out periodically, you have a great system that takes little effort. If, however, you insist on flicking them into the yard (in violation of your lease), we will pick them up for you and charge as with trash because, once again, our folks don't want to be crawling around picking up your cigarette butts, and incoming residents really don't want to have a yard full of old cigarette butts.

## **Are we are required to change the HVAC filter?**

Yes. Changing the HVAC filter *saves you money*. A clogged filter increases the work required of the blower, which simply burns excess electricity. Basic filters cost less than \$1 at stores such as Home Depot and Wal-Mart, and you are obligated to obtain filters and change them monthly.

Sometimes people think that if a clean filter saves energy, no filter at all will save more. Wrong. Running the system without a filter is a huge problem because then the coils inside the unit will get clogged up after a short while and, once more, simply burn electricity by making the blower work harder. But unlike filters that can be changed easily, they're very difficult and expensive to clean. Stay on top of the filter because ultimately it saves money.

## **Are we required to test the Fire/Smoke Alarms?**

Yes. This is a crucial fire safety issue. Generally, our houses have interconnected AC/DC smoke detectors for safety. This is way more than required by most codes, and means that they are wired into the electrical supply, but also have a 9 volt battery for emergency backup. Also, if one goes off, they all go off, alerting everyone quickly in the event of a fire. But they still need to be tested, because they can go out. It only takes a few seconds a month, and is far preferable, from



our perspective, to doing a fire restoration and cleaning up charred bodies. We expect it's preferable from your perspective too, especially if the charred bodies are yours.

## **Are we required to change Light Bulbs.**

Yes. The owner will provide the house with working light bulbs at move-in, and residents must replace them as they burn out at their own expense. Use only 60 watt or lower bulbs in any incandescent fixtures; larger wattages are usually wasteful and sometimes dangerous. If maintenance has to come out to change a bulb for you, expect to pay a service call.

## **How do I reset a Circuit Breaker?**

In most properties the circuit breakers are readily accessible. With standard switch type breakers, simply look for the one that's tripped: it will be in the middle position between On and Off. To reset it, turn it fully off, and then back on. If the handle pops back to the middle position right away, then you have a short circuit condition (or a bad breaker) that must be corrected before the breaker can reset. Some breakers will also have a small button labeled "test." These are Ground Fault or Arc Fault breakers, designed to detect potentially dangerous conditions electronically, and interrupt power. Unfortunately, they are frequently subject to nuisance tripping and false alarms. The test button is there to check operation of the breaker's electronic circuits, which should be done periodically.

## **How do I reset GFCI outlets in the kitchen or bathroom?**

Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter outlets, typically found in kitchens, bathrooms, and other potentially damp locations, have an electronic circuit to detect dangerous situations and interrupt power. They will have two small buttons: "test" and "reset." If one trips, correct any situation that caused the trip (such as a wet appliance), and push the reset button until it clicks. If it trips again, unplug appliances and reset again until you determine which appliance may have caused the fault. Remember that one GFCI receptacle can be wired in to protect multiple downstream outlets, sometimes even across the room, so if an outlet goes out, check all the GFCI's nearby.

## **What else are we required to do keep the property maintained?**



Residents are responsible for light bulbs, hvac filters, shower curtains, mini-blinds, smoke detector batteries, and the like.

## **What is considered "securing property for cold weather"?**

In general it is very simple, and applies to any property, whether it's one of ours or somewhere else. You have to keep the house at 55 degrees or above in the winter. This means that you maintain your electric, water, and gas service, and that you keep your heat turned on even when you are out of town. In Jan 2010 several houses had turned their heat off over Christmas break, and the weather turned bitterly cold for an extended period of time. Several people came back to frozen pipes, and in one case the pipes broke flooding two units and causing thousands of dollars in damage. This isn't a case where it pays to be cheap.

Also, in very cold weather you should drip your faucets. It doesn't have to be much of a drip to help prevent freezing. And if a pipe starts to freeze, a drip will relieve pressure and help prevent pipes from bursting. It is also important to open cabinets on outside walls to allow air circulation around pipes. Flush toilets regularly. Finally, keep an eye on things. Water freezes at 32 degrees, so most of this is common sense.

Different properties have different issues with respect to pipe freezes. If pipes in your unit are particularly vulnerable, we will do our best to advise you of special precautions you should take to prevent frozen pipes.

Finally, heed any cold weather advisories sent via e-mail.

## **The lease states that we must keep the property shoveled and clean of snow or debris, What is a timely manner in which we are expected to do this task?**

We aren't skulking about in the snow waiting to pounce and get \$50 bucks for shoveling snow. Lexington doesn't get that much snow, and it doesn't last very long typically, so this isn't normally a big issue. As of November 1, 2014 we have yet to charge anyone for snow or ice removal. However, Lexington ordinance requires that snow be shoveled off sidewalks and porches within four hours after daylight and after snowfall has stopped. So technically, this means the morning after the snow stops. Obviously, if snow stays on sidewalks for an extended time, it crushes down and becomes a slippery mess of ice. Ordinance also provides that in the event of ice, you have to put out sand or salt. Again, this is actually relatively rare, but snow and ice removal are your responsibility.



WILDCATSTREET

**The lease says that the rent can be increased if state and municipal taxes are being raised. Will a tax raise amount to a few dollars being added to our monthly rent?**

We have never actually passed on tax increases to current residents, even when we got hit with the huge Lextran tax, or more recently the rather hefty environmental cleanup tax. Generally, the rent just goes up the next year. The clause is in the lease because nobody can be sure what the city or state will do. This is a common clause in well drafted lease agreements allowing for property owners to offset a particularly onerous tax assessment. It's one good reason why everyone should watch out for tax increases.