Your Rights as a Tenant During the COVID-19 Crisis

When can your landlord enter your home?

Except in the case of an emergency, your landlord cannot enter your home without your permission. However, the law does not allow you to “unreasonably” refuse to allow your landlord to come into your home to make necessary repairs, show the home to prospective tenants and provide services like spraying to get rid of bugs. Whenever a landlord comes for a routine, non-emergency reason, he must give tell you that he is coming at least 24 hours before he comes.

If my lease is almost over, can my landlord show it to future tenants by bringing these future tenants into my home? You have the right to refuse to allow your landlord into your home as long as your refusal is reasonable. During this public health crisis, we are all expected to socially distance ourselves from others. Under these circumstances, it is reasonable to refuse to let your landlord and future tenants into your home. Many landlords are only showing apartments and houses to future tenants through videos. It is reasonable for you to offer to video your home and send the video to your landlord instead of allowing him and others into your home.

What is considered an emergency right now? Anything that can cause harm to you, your family or other tenants is considered an emergency. For example, a gas leak, electrical or other fire, and an overflowing toilet are all emergencies. Your landlord has the right to come fix, or send a maintenance person to fix, emergencies such as these. During this public health crisis, you have the right to expect anyone coming to do maintenance in your home to wear personal protective equipment, such as a mask.

What can I do if my landlord uses his own key to allow himself and future tenants into my home after I tell him I don’t want them here? At that point, you should contact an attorney. Virginia law allows a tenant to file a lawsuit against a landlord who enters a tenant’s apartment unreasonably or without the tenant’s permission.

If you are facing eviction, if your landlord attempts to lock you out without taking you to court, or if you have questions about your rights, contact your local legal aid by calling 1-866-LEGL-AID or get legal advice from the Eviction Legal Helpline by calling 1-833-NoEvict. Visit VaLegalAid.org for more information.