

OFF-CAMPUS LIVING

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY'S COMMUTER STUDENT NEWSLETTER



Housing & Dining Programs

American University

Spring 2017

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Your Winter Rights and Responsibilities

Winter weather brings new responsibilities as an off-campus student. Your lease should describe your responsibility regarding winter clean up. Students who rent a houses, condominiums, or non-apartment properties are expected to shovel the driveway, parking areas, pathways, stairs and sidewalks. District of Columbia law requires that property owners clear snow and ice from sidewalks, handicap ramps and steps within the first eight hours after the snow, sleet or ice stops falling. In most cases, this responsibility falls to the renter. If ice cannot be removed, you may spread sand or salt to make the sidewalks safe. The D.C. government does not plow alleys. If necessary, alley trash collection will be moved curbside.

The Mayor of D.C. determines when it is necessary to declare a snow emergency. Once a snow emergency is declared, all vehicles parked along the snow route must be removed. Illegal parking vehicles are subject to a \$250 fine, not including towing and impound fees.

As temperatures drop in the Washington area, tenants look to their building's owners to provide adequate heat. If landlords fail to comply, they could face a fine of \$1,000 and other potential penalties and fees from the D.C. Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA). District law also requires minimum temperatures be maintained in living areas during cold weather regardless of the calendar date.

What Landlords Must Do:

- Keep heating equipment in good repair and capable of maintaining temperature of at least 70 degrees.
- If any living unit where the tenant cannot control or set the temperature, the building heat must be kept at least 68 degrees between 6:30am and 11pm, and 65 degrees between 11pm and 6:30am.
- Must have every furnace, boiler, and central heating system inspected between March 1 and September 1 of each year.

What Tenants Must Do:

- Check your thermostat to make sure it is on and in heat mode.
- Contact your landlord, property manager, or building superintendent to report any problems immediately.
- If your problem is not solved, call DCRA's housing inspection staff at (202) 442-9557.

What DCRA Can Do:

- Contact the property owner or agent to tell them about the complaint.
- Dispatch an inspector to investigate the solution. Issue a notice of the violation to fix the problem.
- Any property owner who does not comply with any Notice of Violation may get a fine of \$1,000 as well as other penalties and fees.



Main Office Hours:
Monday-Friday
9am-5pm



facebook.com/auhdp



@auhdp



202-885-3370

One Card Office Hours:

Monday-Thursday
9am-5pm

Friday:
11am-5pm

Saturday:
11am-3pm

Contact DCRA:

dcra@dc.gov

(202) 442-4400

1100 4th Street, SW, Washington, DC 20024



DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER & REGULATORY AFFAIRS

A Message From The Associate Dean of Students

Contributed by Michelle Espinosa, Associate Dean of Students



We all have visions of warm spring weather that will eventually arrive, but there are still a few months of

cold winter weather to manage. Winter weather can present unique challenges to students living off-campus. Here are a few tips and recommendations to make your lives easier and safer!

Trying to warm up your house or apartment? Be safe!

Don't overload electric outlets with space heaters or electric blankets. Be sure to unplug blankets and space heaters when you are not in the room. If you have a working fireplace, talk to

your landlord and be sure it has been properly maintained and is ready for use before lighting a fire.

Keep a container of water close by the fireplace at all time, and never go to sleep or leave your residence without completely extinguishing the fire. Don't place any flammable items near the fire place; talk with your roommates about a fire evacuation plan and make sure all windows and doors can be opened and used as exits in an emergency.

Hoping for a snow day or two... or three? Be prepared!

Buy a snow shovel and other snow removal equipment, such as a few bags of rock salt to help melt ice, and keep your front walk and porch steps safe. Make arrangements for snow

removal, if you are required to do so in your lease. Establish a plan with your roommates for shoveling your front walk and sidewalk in front of your house. Let your landlord know if gutters need to be cleared

Planning to host friends? Be mindful of neighbors!

If you host a gathering, take steps to monitor guests' behavior to keep noise levels at a minimum and end your party at a reasonable hour.

Communicate with neighbors about your plans and provide contact information so they can reach you if needed. Identify one or two roommates as "house managers" any time you have friends over. They can manage guests, monitor noise, clean up the yard and surrounding area, and respond to phone calls or neighbor concerns.

Personal Safety at Night

- 1 Walk with another person or a group if possible!
- 2 If you must walk alone, stay in well lit and heavily trafficked areas.
- 3 If your light is on at night, people can see into your home unless you draw your curtains or blinds!
- 4 Have your keys ready before you get to your building or house.
- 5 Don't be distracted with headphones. Be aware of your surroundings.





Clawed's Corner

By Clawed Z. Eagle
AU Mascot & Housing Expert

My roommate and I want to find a new place to live off campus, but we aren't sure how to go about it. Do you have any advice?

First, look at your lease. When does it expire? If you want to move out before your lease ends, you will likely have to pay a penalty for breaking the lease early. If you plan to move out, let your property owner know two to three months in advance.

Next, you and your roommate can begin searching for new properties. Lucky for you, we will be holding our annual Off-Campus Housing Fair on March 8th from 4-6pm! See page 2 for more information.

Once you and your roommate have found your new home, you will need to figure out how to move your belongings. Will you rent a truck? Borrow someone's car? Bribe your friends with pizza? During your apartment search and move out/in, you will want to have a clear and open line of communication between yourself and the property.

I'm going to be gone for a month or two this summer. Do I still have to pay rent on my apartment? Are there any alternatives?

You always have to pay rent, even on break. You could look into subletting your apartment, but not all apartments allow residents to sublet or do Air B N B. If your property does allow subletting, check out this handy guide!

Got questions? Need a consultation?

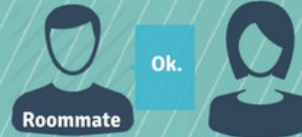
Email

offcampushousing@american.edu

Subletting Your Property

STEP 1: PERMISSION

Check your lease: does it allow you to sublet? Talk with your landlord before listing.



If you have a roommate, talk to them about your intentions to sublet. Involve them in the process.

Furnished 1br for summer to sublet...



STEP 2: LISTING

Advertise your apartment. Tell your friends, use social media, and list on our Off Campus Housing Posting Site!

STEP 3: INTERVIEW



Once people respond to your listing you (and your roommate) should set up meetings with the potential subletter. Decide who you think would be a good fit and offer them the sublease. Let those who did not get the sublease know that you won't be making an offer.

STEP 4: CONTRACT



What are the dates of this arrangement? Will rent be paid to you or directly to the landlord? What condition do you expect the room to be in when you return? Set out your expectations in a written agreement.

STEP 5: LEAVE

Stay in contact with your roommate (if you have one) as well as your subletter to make sure that everything is going smoothly.

HAGS! :D

See ya!



- Sources:
- northwestern.edu/offcampus/resources/how-tos/how-to-sublet/index.html
- money.usnews.com/money/blogs/my-money/2014/06/25/everything-you-need-to-know-about-subletting
- wikihow.com/Sublet-an-Apartment



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY HOUSING
& DINING PROGRAMS PRESENTS...

OFF-CAMPUS HOUSING FAIR

2017

MARCH 8TH, 2017

4pm to 6pm
MGC 2-5

Fair Snacks!



Door Prizes!



Spring Break Safety

Going away for spring break? Don't forget to follow these home safety tips.

-  Let someone in your building or neighborhood (property manager, neighbor, etc.) know you will be out of town. Ask them to call you if they see something out of the ordinary.
-  Ask someone to collect your mail or place a hold on your mail delivery while you're gone.
-  Throw out any food which may expire while you are away.
-  Before leaving, unplug your electronics and appliances.
-  Take out your garbage and recycling.
-  Lock your windows.
-  Lock your door!

**HAVE A SAFE AND FUN
SPRING BREAK!**

