



TEXAS APARTMENT ASSOCIATION

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Ten Housing Tips for Victims of a Natural Disaster

In the midst of your tremendous sadness and loss, we want to provide information you can use when looking for temporary or longer-term housing. The Texas Apartment Association (TAA) has developed the following tips, and has urged its member properties to respond compassionately to this disaster.

In many cases, apartment communities may be willing to work with your specific circumstances to help you find a place to live. Please note that rents may be higher in urban areas and that the specific options available will vary.

Below are additional tips for your use:

1. You will probably be asked to fill out a **rental application**. You will probably be asked for a photo ID such as a driver's license or other government issued ID when you fill out the application. Provide as much information as you can so that the owner can process the application as quickly as possible.
2. The application may ask for **employment** and other information. Tell the property owner if your employer cannot be contacted because of the hurricane. The property owner may be able to verify current or past employment in another way.
3. The application may ask for your **income**. Tell the property owner if you do not have copies of your pay stubs or bank statements. Someone may be able to assist you in printing or finding copies of these documents. Also tell the property owner if you have registered for and are eligible for money from FEMA, the American Red Cross, or other agencies.
4. The rental application may allow the property owner to check your **credit history**. This is a common procedure for most property owners. Some owners may choose not to check your credit if you will only live on their property for a short time.
5. The application may allow the property owner to check your **criminal history**. This is a common procedure for many property owners. Please be sure to answer questions about your criminal history honestly. If you do not, you may be evicted in the future. This process helps ensure the safety of you and your family, as well as the other residents in the community.
6. In most cases, you will need to sign a **written lease** before you move into an apartment or house. It is in your best interest to sign a written lease. Even if you are not paying rent, the lease outlines your rights and responsibilities as a renter.
7. Read the **lease** carefully. Pay attention to how long you are agreeing to rent the apartment or house, how much the rent is, where to pay the rent, and when the rent is due.
8. Look at the lease language about **security deposits**. This describes what you must do to be eligible to get your money back at the end of the lease. Pay particular attention to how much advance notice you must give when you want to end the lease.
9. Make sure you read the **termination notice** provisions in the lease. If you think you will only be staying in Texas for a few weeks, you should probably ask for a **month-to-month** lease. Be sure to give a written notice to end your lease and provide the right amount of notice.
10. Review the **move-out** information in the lease. This will tell you what you have to do when you move out of the apartment or house. You must give the right amount of advance notice to meet the terms of the lease.

UNIFYING TEXAS RENTAL HOUSING PROFESSIONALS THROUGH EDUCATION, LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY AND MEMBER SERVICES

25 LOCAL AFFILIATES ACROSS THE STATE OF TEXAS: ABILENE • AMARILLO • AUSTIN • BEAUMONT • BRYAN • CORPUS CHRISTI • CORSICANA • DALLAS • EL PASO • FORT WORTH • GALVESTON • HARLINGEN • HOUSTON
KILLEEN/TEMPLE • LONGVIEW • LUBBOCK • LUFKIN/NACOGDOCHES • MIDLAND/ODESSA • SAN ANGELO • SAN ANTONIO • TEXARKANA • TYLER • VICTORIA • WACO • WICHITA FALLS

Additional Resources

The Texas Apartment Association is encouraging its members to work cooperatively with local authorities and support relief efforts for disaster victims. Here are some additional resources for you:

- For information on federal assistance that may be available, visit the Federal Emergency Management Association website at www.fema.gov. You can register online for assistance. In addition, you can call FEMA at 1-800-621-FEMA (3362), or for the hearing/speech impaired at TTY: 1-800-462-7585. FEMA may also have staff on the ground in affected areas.
- For information on other relief or emergency assistance that may be available, visit the American Red Cross website at <http://www.redcross.org/>. The hotline for information about evacuation shelters is 866-GET-INFO.
- Additional information about hurricane relief and recovery efforts may be available on the Department of Homeland Security website at www.dhs.gov.
- To contact the local apartment association in your area for more information, visit <http://www.taa.org/renters/RentersHelp.php> and click on the city or portion of the map nearest you.
- Some free apartment locator companies also list available rental units online. Some you may want to check are: Apartment Finder at www.apartmentfinder.com; Apartment Guide/ApartmentGuide.com at www.apartmentguide.com; For Rent Magazine/ForRent.com at www.forrent.com; Apartments.com at www.apartments.com; MoveForFree.com at www.moveforfree.com; RENTNET at www.rentnet.com; and Rent.com at www.rent.com.

Many apartment management companies have company websites that list their apartment properties. If you lived in an apartment prior to the natural disaster, check the management company's website for information about any available properties.

