

Coping with the Hot Texas Summer

NEIGHBORS
CARE

Tips for TAA members

- ✿ Promote the Neighbors CARE program to your residents. Distribute the Neighbors CARE flyers and Heat-Stress Precautions tip sheets to all residents, and post the information in common areas.
- ✿ Consider distributing the “Keeping Cool and Conserving Energy” tips to your residents. You may want to modify the tips to include information specific to your property and location. For example, if your property has programmable thermostats, you may want to advise residents about how to use them. Or, you may want to include additional information about how to report needed repairs to management (initially to a specific phone number with a follow-up in writing, etc.). You may also want to give specific information and a phone number for the electric utility in your area, repair delays (if any) being experienced in your area, or your company’s policies on responding to air conditioner repairs during normal conditions and during any extreme heat emergencies.
- ✿ You may want to investigate any local programs (fan distributions, shelters, emergency assistance) and have information about these programs available in your onsite offices for residents who may inquire about them or need them.
- ✿ Remember to clean and replace air filters regularly on your air conditioners. Once a month is preferable.
- ✿ Take care of any needed caulking, weather-stripping or insulation to improve the energy efficiency of your units and reduce the amount of heat gained inside the units.
- ✿ Keep outside air conditioning equipment free of leaves or other airflow obstructions.
- ✿ Air conditioners should be cleaned annually (in spring, typically) to work efficiently.
- ✿ During any heat emergency, TAA strongly encourages its members not to exercise any legal rights to disconnect electricity. Statutory authority to disconnect electricity is only applicable in limited situations. Public Utility Commission (PUC) rules prohibit electric companies from disconnecting electrical service during extreme weather. Disconnections also are prohibited in many cases when ill or disabled residents are involved or if the resident receives emergency assistance to pay their utility bills. PUC rules limit disconnections in similar circumstances when electricity is submetered or allocated. According to the PUC, most utilities go beyond the requirements of the rule by using their own more stringent criteria or suspending disconnections altogether. In light of that fact, and the health and safety issues that could arise from electricity disconnections during times of extreme temperatures, we encourage our members to exercise other legal remedies to secure payment of rent or other sums. Remember, if you do plan to disconnect electricity in situations where the PUC rules do not prohibit it, you must follow strict guidelines. See the 2008-2009 TAA REDBOOK, pages 189, 192, 198 and 224.
- ✿ Consider supporting bill check-off programs sponsored by your local utility company and encourage your residents to support them as well. These programs allow utility customers to contribute funds to help ill, elderly and low-income individuals with their utility bills.
- ✿ Consider supporting local fan drives or other programs to provide fans or other equipment to ill, elderly or low-income individuals. Encourage your residents to support these efforts as well.

