

St. Petersburg Times

Some consumer advice bears repeating

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Published July 21, 2006

Many of the consumer issues that plague Action's readers are recurring. Here are some of the more frequent ones: *(Portion of article omitted here.)*

Landlord-tenant disputes: The most frequent landlord-tenant disputes involve the return of the deposit. Most contracts specify the conditions for terminating the lease by either side.

Otherwise, Florida Statute 83.57 states that when a unit is rented without a specific term, either party may terminate the rental by giving written notice as follows: where rent is paid yearly, a notice of 60 days; where quarterly, 30 days; where monthly, 15 days; and where weekly, at least seven days' notice. The specific statutes are available online at www.leg.state.fl.us.

One of the most important responsibilities as a tenant is to leave the apartment in a clean and acceptable condition. Scheduling a final walk-through with the landlord and getting a signed and dated receipt stating what the problems are, if any, can offer leverage if the landlord withholds any of the deposit for damages.

Once the premises have been vacated, the landlord has 15 days to return the security deposit (plus interest, if applicable) if he does not intend to impose a claim upon it. Otherwise, he has 30 days to justify in writing, sent by certified mail to the tenant's last known mailing address, why he intends to keep a portion, or all of it.

If the notice is not sent as required within the 30-day period, the landlord forfeits the right to impose a claim upon the deposit, unless there was failure to by the tenant to give proper notice before vacating.

For information on Florida's Landlord Tenant law, go to www.800helpfla.com and click on Publications.

Action solves problems and gets answers for you. If you have a question, or your own attempts to resolve a consumer complaint have failed, write Times Action, P.O. Box 1121, St. Petersburg, FL 33731, or call your Action number, (727) 893-8171, or, outside of Pinellas, toll-free 1-800-333-7505, ext. 8171, to leave a recorded request. Requests will be accepted only by mail or voice mail; calls cannot be returned. We will not be responsible for personal documents, so please send only photocopies. If your complaint concerns merchandise ordered by mail, we need copies of both sides of your canceled check. We may require additional information or prefer to reply by mail; therefore, readers must provide a full mailing address, including ZIP code. Names of letter writers will not be omitted except in unusual circumstances. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

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