



## Why Do We Need Housing Codes?

City and county housing codes help keep communities in safe and sanitary condition. The housing code sets the rules of basic upkeep and care for decent housing. These rules help to take care of problems that may cause unsafe or unhealthy conditions.

The code applies to all housing in your city or county. You can use the housing code to complain about bad housing conditions and other area problems.

## Are There Housing Code Rules?

The housing code in your area may have one set of rules for rental housing and another one for owner-occupied housing. Owner-occupied housing means that person who owns the house lives in it.

The rules for rental housing apply to public and private housing. They also apply to Section 8 and other government housing. The tenants or owner can make a complaint or ask for an inspection with the local housing code office.

When violations are found, the city or county gives the owner notice. The owner is then given a certain amount of time to fix the problem. If the owner does not fix the problem, the city or county can take legal action. This means they can bring criminal charges against the landlord or owner. The rules are spelled out in the housing code for your area.

## How Do I Make A Complaint?

You can make a complaint and ask for an inspection. Get in touch with your local housing code office. You can do this in person or by

phone. However, it is best to do this in writing.

Renters should tell the landlord about bad conditions before making a complaint. Give the landlord a reasonable amount of time to fix the problem. If this does not work, call your local housing code office. Ask for an inspection. An inspector will come out to look at the property. Your complaint will be kept on file.

If there is danger - like gas leaks or frayed electrical wires - call your local Fire Marshal. Do this at once.

## What Is A Nuisance?

A nuisance is a problem that makes the neighborhood unattractive or unsafe. Some examples are abandoned buildings and cars; weak walls or fences; holes in the street or ground; and garbage.

You can ask the city or county to take quick action to get rid of the nuisance. Complaints about a nuisance can be in writing or by phone. Make these complaints to your city or county housing code office.

If a nuisance is on the property, the owner must fix it within a certain amount of time. If the problem is not fixed, the owner can be fined or sent to jail. In some cases a court can order the city or county to fix the problem.

## What About Vacant Property?

Some housing codes have special rules for vacant buildings and lots. Vacant buildings must be boarded up. They must also be kept in decent and safe condition. If someone complains, the city or county can inspect the building very quickly. This depends on the rules

of your housing code.

If the housing inspector finds that a vacant building is a health or safety threat to people in the community, the owner will get a notice. The owner is given a certain amount of time to fix the problems. If the building cannot be fixed, the owner must board it up or tear it down.

Vacant lots also should be secured and kept clean. Not all housing codes have rules for vacant lots. Check with your local housing office. If they do not handle complaints about vacant lots, ask them who does.

## Summary

Housing codes help keep neighborhoods safe and attractive. Renters and homeowners can use them to fix bad housing and health or safety threats. Complaints can be made by phone, in person, or by letter to your local housing code office. You can also ask for an inspection.

Remember, when you make a complaint or ask for an inspection, the city or county should respond within a certain amount of time. These time limits vary for each county and city. Check the housing code in your area for these time limits. This brochure contains a list of city and county housing code office phone numbers.

If you cannot solve your problem by working with your local housing code office, call the Atlanta Legal Aid Society office nearest you. If you meet client eligibility requirements, they may be able to help you.

## Metro Atlanta Housing Code Enforcement

## Numbers:

Atlanta	404-330-6190
Decatur	404-377-9911
Lawrenceville	770-963-2414
Clayton County	770-477-3569
DeKalb County	404-371-2776
Gwinnett County	770-822-7550
College Park	404-669-3762
East Point	404-765-1030
Marietta	770-429-4253
Cobb County	770-528-2180
Fulton County	404-730-8355

## Contact Us

DeKalb County  
246 Sycamore Street  
Suite 120  
Decatur, GA 30030  
(404) 377-0701

Clayton County Pro Bono Project  
1000 Main Street  
Forest Park, GA 30050  
(404) 366-0586

Cobb County  
30 S. Park Square  
Marietta, GA 30090  
(770) 528-2565

Fulton County  
151 Spring Street, N.W.  
Atlanta, GA 30303  
(404) 524-5811

South Fulton &  
Clayton Counties  
1514 East Cleveland Avenue  
Suite 100  
East Point, GA 30344  
(404) 669-0233  
(Wagon Works Building)

Gwinnett County  
180 Camden Hill Road  
Suite A  
Lawrenceville, GA 30045  
(678)376-4545

For TTD/TTY users, call the Georgia Relay  
Center at (800) 255-0135.

Copyright Atlanta Legal Aid Society, Inc.  
June 30, 2008



# Housing Codes

Atlanta Legal Aid Society, Inc.