



Compliments of the Apartment Association of Tarrant County – Texas

Lights Out

Written by David Wyatt

A slight winter breeze touches your face as you turn the front door key and prepare to enter your latest vacant rental. Mid-morning sunlight leaks into the living room casting shadows across the empty, slightly chilled front room. You make a mental note to turn the thermostat up a bit before you leave. You are showing the property to a prospective resident in a couple of days, and you want it to be a comfortable environment.

As you walk in, your attention is drawn to the kitchen where light streams in from the large, blindless and curtainless window. Everything appears to be clean. It smells clean. No visible damage.

You silently walk down the dark hallway towards the thermostat, back bedrooms, and hall bathroom. You pass the bathroom first, so you decide to inspect. You push open the bathroom door. You intently stare first at the sink then the toilet and then instinctively at the shower curtain. You spot something on the bathroom mirror. The sunlit dust particles direct your hand towards the object. You reach up to turn on the light so you can get a closer look.

The light does not come on. You flick the switch again, still no light. You try three or four more times, still no light. You check to see if the bulb is missing. The bulb is there, and looks fairly new. Perhaps it is a bad switch.

You step out of the bathroom and into the hall. You flip on the thermostat fan to “on” nothing happens. You turn the heat on, again nothing happens. You begin to get a bad feeling in your stomach. You step across the hall and into the small bedroom. You raise your head towards the ceiling light fixture as you flip the light switch. No light. Up and down to infinity and still no light.

You run out of the bedroom down the dark cold hall turning-on every light in the unit. Standing in the middle of the living room catching your breath, darkness engulfs you. Your worst fear is realized: no electricity!

Sound familiar?

Most rental housing owners have experienced this inconvenience. Residents do goofy things including terminating electricity and other utilities without your knowledge. In the past, dealing with utility issues was part of the “joy” of being a landlord. How times have changed! Electricity deregulation has impacted all of us, and dealing with utility companies has increasing become more frustrating.

AATC’s IROC members will gather at 12:00 noon on Wednesday, February 9, at Spring Creek BBQ in Bedford to discussing issues concerning electricity. Make plans to join us for this popular, peer to peer networking opportunity.

Prior to February 9, be sure to review your 2004-2005 REDBOOK pages 192 and 197 in which TAA legal counsel Larry Neimann addresses many of the problems associated with deregulation and offers practical advice and solutions to these concerns.

Another resource you will want to consult is the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) at www.ercot.com. ERCOT is the entity that “administers the state’s power grid” of over 38,000 miles of transmission lines. ERCOT’s website is very user friendly and has an excellent FAQ section on electricity deregulation issues.

See you at Spring Creek.