

Tips on Working with Your Landlord to Green Your Apartment

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Too often when we talk about living green, we focus on homeowners rather than renters. At Skally Management, a family-owned and -operated real estate management company in St. Paul, we're changing that concept by finding innovative ways to practice **Eco-Management**: sustainable, responsible real estate management designed to have a positive impact on our local environment and community.

We encourage renters to see their landlords as partners in living green. Try to start a face-to-face discussion with them, rather than using phone or e-mail. Prepare for your meeting by researching the changes you want to make or suggestions you want to share. For example, by researching how much water and money they can save by fixing a water leak, you're showing how the landlord can help the environment as well as their bottom line.

You may need to meet with your landlord more than once to make green changes, especially if conservation is new to them. You might want to start with a smaller project-like installing low flow devices on your showers and sinks to save water. These devices retail for five to twenty dollars at any local hardware store and usually take minutes to install. Another easy way to save water is to test your toilet for leaks. Just take food dye and put a few drops in the top toilet tank. If the dye color appears in the toilet bowl, you have a leak.

By starting small and giving your landlord time to see the savings and benefits of these changes, you can eventually suggest larger projects, such as replacing old windows that let heat escape during the winter. If your windows have air leaks, you can use special caulk or plastic to seal them. If your apartment gets too hot in the winter, don't open your windows. Instead, notify your landlords so they can adjust the heater.

Always ask permission before making any changes in your apartment or building. This lets the landlords know that you are respectful and trying to work with them and will increase your chances of success.

As landlords, we can implement building-wide policies, such as installing solar panels and energy-efficient appliances, making a property smoke-free, and landscaping with native plants, yet one of our most important "green goals" is to help our residents find creative ways to live green in their apartments. Some of the ways we do this include:

Posting green tips on our web site

Publishing a resident newsletter with green tips

Helping residents get off junk mail lists to reduce paper waste

Placing recycling bins by mailboxes to encourage recycling

Reducing the reliance on paper checks and envelopes by offering electronic rent payment

Using compact fluorescent bulbs in light fixtures

Using power strips to reduce "phantom" electricity use from TVs, stereos, and computers

Removing air conditioners in the fall to prevent heat loss during cold months

Chad Skally grew up in the property management business and manages several buildings in the Twin Cities. He lives with his wife, Shannon and their two children in St. Paul. Amy Pickett also grew up in the property management business and helps manage buildings for Skally Management.

Footnotes/Endnotes

ON THE WEB!

Xcel Energy, xcelenergy.com

Eureka Recycling,
eurekarecycling.org

Neighborhood Energy Connection, thenec.org