

## Turnover to Green!

Even if you are not undergoing a complete building upgrade, individual apartment turnover provides an opportunity to reduce energy use and improve air quality in the building through healthier, greener and cost-effective choices. Below are suggestions about how to green your buildings one unit at a time, gleaned from presentations at the *Managing Lean and Green* workshop series sponsored by Pratt Center for Community Development, Association for Neighborhood and Housing Development and the Supportive Housing Network of NY.

**Reduce water use:** Reducing water use is one of the most cost-effective 'green' measures for multifamily buildings because it simultaneously reduces use of heating fuel to heat hot water, reduces electric use to pump the water, lowers water and sewer bills and reduces the flow of water into NYC's overloaded sewage system that causes untreated waste to enter our waterways.

- Replace shower heads with low-flow models; Andrew Padian of Community Preservation Corporation recommended Niagara Earth 1.75 gallons per minute (gpm) shower heads because they supply good pressure with less water than other models.
- Use .5 gpm aerators for bathroom sinks.
- Use 1-2 gpm aerators for kitchen sinks; install ENERGY STAR® dishwashers where possible; dishwashers use substantially less water per load than hand washing.
- Replace toilets with high efficiency toilets. 1.6 gallons per flush is maximum allowed, but there are models that can do better than that.
- Fix the leaks! Make sure toilets and faucets are working properly.

**Increase insulation and air sealing:** You will reduce bugs and pests, noise and smells between apartments and drafts by sealing exterior and interior holes while reducing energy waste.

- Anytime you are opening any walls, make sure there is quality insulation that is installed right. Insulation should completely fill voids in the wall, such as the space between studs.
- Insert boric acid in all the cracks and holes and seal with a foam gun.
- Caulk around windows.
- Seal around openings for electricity and plumbing.
- Install sealing in sockets.
- Install weather-stripping on the apartment door.

**Lighting and appliances:** ENERGY STAR CFL bulbs use 75% less than standard incandescent bulbs and last in the range of 15 times longer. You will reduce super time for changing bulbs and your electric costs by changing bulbs.

- Replace all incandescent bulbs with CFLs (or LEDs).
- Dispose of CFL bulbs at designated locations.
- Replace old, inefficient refrigerators and other appliances, e.g., air conditioners, lighting fixtures, dishwashers, with energy efficient, ENERGY STAR models. (Take out window-unit air conditioners in winter).

**Radiators:** Radiator valves should be able to turn open and close fully and should be replaced periodically.

- Check and replace non-functioning radiator valves.

**Painting:** That 'new paint smell' is the smell of chemicals that have been determined to be harmful to our health, causing immediate allergic reactions in some, and longer term health implications for others, including your tenants and building staff.

- Use no VOC (volatile organic compound) paints.

**Flooring:** Polyurethane is toxic, smelly and costly. Carpets collect dirt and dust and the glues commonly used to attach them to the floor are also toxic.

- Ed Rogers of Phipps Housing Services, Inc. recommended Mr. Sandless Floor Company which mimics sanding with a wet, non-toxic solution and treats floors with a fast-drying (1-4 hours) compound that comes with a 5-year warrantee and costs less than sanding and coating with polyurethane.
- Replace carpets with hard floors when possible.

**Health and safety:** In more tightly sealed apartments, it becomes more important to minimize toxins.

- Use healthy cleaning products. Phipps Housing Services found that 95% of cleaning products could be replaced with greener, healthier products at a cost of 3-4% more than traditional products and that sick (absentee) days by building supers and porters decreased significantly after the switch.
- Ensure that smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are installed and working properly. They should be hard wired.

**Educate and engage new tenants:** Encourage tenants to participate in building-wide initiatives to reduce energy use and improve the environment.

- Provide bins with clear labels for recycling.
- Post clear instructions in the apartment about how to turn off radiator valves if they are too warm rather than opening windows.
- Include requests to tenants to turn off lights and other electronics when they are not using them and provide other information about environmental initiatives in orientation instructions and materials.

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