

Here is a list of common habitability issues that California Tenants often face in their rental units followed by a guide to reporting them:

### Structural and Safety Issues:

- Leaking or broken plumbing (e.g., sinks, toilets, pipes).
- Unsafe electrical wiring or lack of working electrical outlets.
- Broken windows or doors that don't lock properly or provide inadequate security.
- Damaged or leaking roof or ceilings.
- Faulty or missing smoke detectors or carbon monoxide detectors.
- Lack of proper ventilation (e.g., in bathrooms or kitchens).

### Health and Sanitation Issues:

- Mold growth due to moisture or leaks.
- Pest infestations (e.g., cockroaches, bed bugs, rodents).
- Unaddressed water damage causing mold, mildew, or structural decay.
- Sewage backup or clogged drains.
- Lack of potable (drinkable) water or no access to hot water.
- Garbage or waste accumulation due to improper disposal systems.

### Heating, Cooling, and Utilities:

- Non-functional heating system (especially in winter months).
- Broken or inefficient air conditioning (in regions where cooling is considered essential).
- Lack of electricity or power outages caused by faulty systems.
- Gas leaks or issues with gas appliances.

### Uninhabitable Living Conditions:

- Extreme noise levels (e.g., due to nearby construction or unsafe neighbors) that violate local noise ordinances.
- Flooding or standing water inside the unit.
- Peeling paint or exposed lead paint, especially in older buildings.

### Environmental Hazards:

- Asbestos exposure, particularly in older units.
- Excessive dampness or humidity causing potential health hazards.
- Unsafe flooring (e.g., damaged carpet, broken tiles, or loose floorboards).



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## Common Area or Building Issues:

- Unsafe stairways, railings, or walkways.
- Elevators that don't work properly, especially in multi-story buildings.
- Poor lighting in hallways, common areas, or entryways, posing security risks.

## Lack of Basic Amenities:

- Non-functional appliances provided by the landlord (e.g., stoves, refrigerators).
- Inadequate sanitary facilities (e.g., insufficient toilets or sinks for the number of tenants).
- Broken locks or security gates, putting tenant safety at risk.

These habitability issues, if unaddressed, could significantly impact a tenant's quality of life and may entitle them to legal remedies such as repairs, rent reductions, or even lease termination in severe cases.

### 1. Notify the Landlord in Writing

**Written Notice:** Send a formal letter or email to your landlord or property management detailing the habitability issues (e.g., leaks, mold, pest infestations). Be clear and specific about the problem and include any relevant dates.

**Keep Records:** Make sure to keep copies of all correspondence for your records. Written communication helps create a paper trail if the issue is not resolved.

**Delivery Method:** Send the letter via certified mail with a return receipt, or use email with a "read receipt" to ensure the landlord received it. Send texts with photos & videos of the problems included.

### 2. Use Maintenance Request Forms

**Online Portals:** If your property has an online portal for submitting maintenance requests, use it to report habitability issues. This often provides an official record of the request.

**Physical Forms:** If the property management uses physical maintenance request forms, complete and submit the form. Keep a copy for your records or take a picture of the form before you submit it to the office.

### 3. Follow Up with Phone Calls

**Phone Call:** After submitting a written request, follow up with a phone call to your landlord or property management office. Confirm that they received the request and ask for a timeline for repairs.

**Document the Conversation:** Take notes during the call, including the date, time, and name of the person you spoke with. This can help if the issue isn't resolved in a timely manner.

### 4. Document the Issues

**Photos and Videos:** Take detailed photos or videos of the habitability issues (e.g., mold, pests, water damage). This visual evidence can support your case if the landlord disputes the problem or delays repairs.

**Log of Issues:** Keep a written log documenting the dates when the problem started, your communications with the landlord, and any responses or delays in repair efforts.

**Official Testing:** Get your unit tested for mold & moisture or hire a home inspector to create a report with a list of habitability issues that your unit is currently facing.

## **5. Request an Inspection from Local Authorities**

**Code Enforcement:** If the landlord fails to address serious habitability issues after being notified, contact your local Code Enforcement Office or Health Department to request an inspection.

**Health Department:** For health-related issues like mold, pests, or sewage problems, the health department may inspect and enforce health and safety regulations.

**File a Complaint:** File a formal complaint with the local government to have an official inspection conducted. The landlord may face fines or citations if the property is found to violate habitability standards.

## **6. Contact Your Local Housing Authority (For Subsidized Housing)**

**Housing Authority Inspection:** If you live in subsidized housing (e.g., Section 8), report the issues to your local housing authority. They are responsible for ensuring that your rental unit meets federal Housing Quality Standards (HQS).

**Request an Inspection:** Ask for an inspection by the housing authority, especially if the issue has not been resolved through normal channels.

## **7. File a Complaint with the California Department of Consumer Affairs**

**Landlord-Tenant Complaint:** The California Department of Consumer Affairs provides assistance to tenants who are dealing with unresponsive landlords or habitability issues.

**Tenant Resources:** Visit the California Department of Consumer Affairs for guidance and to file a complaint if necessary.

Addressing habitability issues in your rental unit can feel overwhelming, but taking the right steps to report the problem ensures that your concerns are heard and addressed. By documenting the issue thoroughly, communicating clearly with your landlord in writing, and knowing when to escalate to local authorities or seek legal assistance, you can protect your rights and work toward a resolution. Remember, maintaining a habitable and safe living environment is your landlord's responsibility, and as a tenant in California, you have legal protections to help ensure that your home meets basic health and safety standards. By staying informed and proactive, you can improve your chances of successfully resolving habitability issues and securing the safe living conditions you deserve.

Here is a list of legal organizations who may be able to provide you with free legal advice to help you address the harassment issues at your rental unit.

## **Tenant Law Group Legal Aid Resources List**

### **Statewide Resources:**

#### *California Rural Legal Assistance (CRLA)*

Offers legal services to low-income residents in rural areas.

- Website: [www.crla.org](http://www.crla.org)
- Phone: 1-800-337-0690

#### *LawHelpCA.org*

An online directory of legal aid offices and self-help resources.

- Website: [www.lawhelpca.org](http://www.lawhelpca.org)

#### *Tenants Together*

A statewide tenant rights organization offering legal advice and resources.

- Website: [www.tenantstogether.org](http://www.tenantstogether.org)
- Phone: 1-888-495-8020

#### *California Courts Self-Help Center*

Provides online resources and guidance for tenants.

- Website: [www.courts.ca.gov/selfhelp.htm](http://www.courts.ca.gov/selfhelp.htm)

#### *California Civil Rights Department*

Provides online resources, dispute resolutions, and possible legal help for certain protected class tenants in California.

### **Northern California:**

#### *Bay Area Legal Aid (Bay Legal)*

Provides legal services to low-income tenants in seven Bay Area counties.

- Website: [www.baylegal.org](http://www.baylegal.org)
- Phone: 1-800-551-5554



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### *Legal Assistance for Seniors (Oakland)*

Offers legal aid to older adults facing housing issues in Alameda County.

- Website: [www.lashicap.org](http://www.lashicap.org)
- Phone: 1-510-832-3040

### *East Bay Community Law Center (EBCLC)*

Provides legal services to tenants in Alameda County.

- Website: [www.ebclc.org](http://www.ebclc.org)
- Phone: 1-510-548-4040

### *Legal Aid of Marin*

Offers legal aid to low-income residents in Marin County.

- Website: [www.legalaidmarin.org](http://www.legalaidmarin.org)
- Phone: 1-415-492-0230

### *Legal Aid Society of San Mateo County*

Provides free legal assistance to tenants in San Mateo County.

- Website: [www.legalaidsmc.org](http://www.legalaidsmc.org)
- Phone: 1-650-558-0915

## **Central California:**

### *Central California Legal Services (CCLS)*

Offers free legal services in Fresno, Merced, Tulare, and nearby counties.

- Website: [www.centralcallegal.org](http://www.centralcallegal.org)
- Phone: 1-800-675-8001

### *Inland Counties Legal Services (ICLS)*

Provides legal aid for tenants in Riverside and San Bernardino counties.

- Website: [www.inlandlegal.org](http://www.inlandlegal.org)
- Phone: 1-888-245-4257

### *Greater Bakersfield Legal Assistance (GBLA)*

Provides free legal services to tenants in Kern County.

- Website: [www.gbla.org](http://www.gbla.org)
- Phone: 1-661-325-5943

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### *California Indian Legal Services (CILS)*

Offers legal assistance to Native American communities across California, including tenants' rights.

- Website: [www.calindian.org](http://www.calindian.org)
- Phone: 1-800-829-0284

### ***Southern California:***

#### *Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles (LAFLA)*

One of the largest legal services organizations in Southern California, serving low-income tenants in Los Angeles.

- Website: [www.lafla.org](http://www.lafla.org)
- Phone: 1-800-399-4529

#### *Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles County (NLSLA)*

Provides legal aid to tenants in the San Fernando, Antelope, and San Gabriel Valleys.

- Website: [www.nlsla.org](http://www.nlsla.org)
- Phone: 1-800-433-6251

#### *Public Counsel (Los Angeles)*

Offers free legal services to tenants in Los Angeles County, with a focus on housing rights and eviction defense.

- Website: [www.publiccounsel.org](http://www.publiccounsel.org)
- Phone: 1-213-385-2977

#### *Community Legal Aid SoCal (formerly Legal Aid Society of Orange County)*

Provides legal aid to tenants in Orange and southeast Los Angeles counties.

- Website: [www.communitylegalsocal.org](http://www.communitylegalsocal.org)
- Phone: 1-800-834-5001

#### *Legal Aid Society of San Diego (LASSD)*

Helps low-income tenants in San Diego County with eviction and other housing issues.

- Website: [www.lassd.org](http://www.lassd.org)
- Phone: 1-877-534-2524

#### *Bet Tzedek Legal Services (Los Angeles)*

Provides free legal assistance, including housing and tenant rights.

- Website: [www.bettzedek.org](http://www.bettzedek.org)
- Phone: 1-323-939-0506