

Your Rights as a Tenant During COVID-19 Outbreak

Your Landlord cannot lawfully evict you without first taking you to court:

- You do not have to move out just because the landlord tells you to leave or sends you an unlawful detainer.
- The landlord cannot evict you until a court order is issued. Any statement in a lease that says you give up (waive) your rights to the court eviction process is not enforceable.
- All court proceedings in state court are suspended until at least April 6, 2020, but a landlord can still file a case to evict you. It is not clear when those cases will get heard.

Your Landlord cannot force you out by shutting off power or locking you out:

- Your landlord cannot shut off utilities, lock you out of the rental unit, or evict you without giving you notice and going to court.
- If the landlord locks you out or deliberately fails to supply essential services, such as heat, water, gas or electricity, you should call local law enforcement for help.
- You may also have grounds to sue in court to get back into the property and get utilities restored. The courts are still hearing cases like these (called “unlawful exclusions”).

Your landlord has an ongoing duty to do repairs:

- The virus outbreak does not excuse your landlord from making repairs, and the landlord must continue to provide you with a habitable place to live.
- If something in home breaks, send your landlord a written notice and request prompt repairs.

You should not see any interruption in your utility services, including water and electricity:

- The State Corporate Commission has directed regulated electric, natural gas, and water companies in Virginia to suspend service disconnections until the coronavirus outbreak subsides.
- If you have previously been disconnected from Dominion Energy service for nonpayment, call 1-866-366-4357 to get reconnected.

Court Closures:

- The Supreme Court of Virginia has declared a judicial emergency and suspended all non-emergency court proceedings and all deadlines until at least April 6, 2020.
- You can still go to the court to seek emergency relief, such as if your landlord has locked you out of your home.

If you are facing an eviction, contact your local legal aid by calling (804) 782-9438 or get legal advice from the Eviction Helpline by calling 1-833-NoEvict.