As the seasons change, so do your responsibilities as an off-campus student.

**Winter**

Students who rent a houses, condominiums, or non-apartment properties are expected to shovel the driveway, parking areas, pathways, stairs and sidewalks. District of Columbia law requires that property owners clear snow and ice from sidewalks, handicap ramps and steps within the first eight hours after the snow, sleet or ice stops falling. In most cases, this responsibility falls to the renter. If ice cannot be removed, you may spread sand or salt to make the sidewalks safe. The D.C. government does not plow alleys. If necessary, alley trash collection will be moved curbside.

If a snow emergency is declared, all vehicles parked along the snow route must be removed. Illegal parking vehicles are subject to a $250 fine, not including towing and impound fees.

**What Landlords Must Do:**
- Provide adequate heat to tenants. If they fail to do so, they face a $1000 fine from the D.C. Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA).
- If any living unit where the tenant cannot control or set the temperature, the building heat must be kept at least 68 degrees between 6:30am and 11pm, and 65 degrees between 11pm and 6:30am.
- Must have every furnace, boiler, and central heating system inspected between March 1 and September 1 of each year.

**What Tenants Must Do:**
- Contact your landlord, property manager, or building superintendent to report any problems immediately.
- If your problem is not solved, call DCRA's housing inspection staff at (202) 442-9557.

**Spring**

Once warmer weather comes, students living in non-apartment properties should check their gutters to make sure they are clear. Know if it is your responsibility or your landlord's responsibility to clean gutters.

**What Landlords Must Do:**
- Provide tenants with adequate air conditioning or face a $1000 fine from the DCRA.
- Have Air Conditioning units serviced

**What Tenants Must Do:**
- Discuss lawn care with landlord. In most cases, renters are responsible for mowing their lawns.
- Check outside faucets to make sure they have not frozen during the winter.

Contact DCRA:
dcra@dc.gov (202) 442-4400
1100 4th Street, SW,
Washington, DC 20024
A Message From The Associate Dean of Students

Contributed by Michelle Espinosa, Associate Dean of Students

We all have visions of warm spring weather that will eventually arrive, but there are still a few months of cold winter weather to manage. Winter weather can present unique challenges to students living off-campus. Here are a few tips and recommendations to make your lives easier and safer!

**Trying to warm up your house or apartment? Be safe!**

Don’t overload electric outlets with space heaters or electric blankets. Be sure to unplug blankets and space heaters when you are not in the room. If you have a working fireplace, talk to your landlord and be sure it has been properly maintained and is ready for use before lighting a fire.

Keep a container of water close by the fireplace at all time, and never go to sleep or leave your residence without completely extinguishing the fire. Don’t place any flammable items near the fire place; talk with your roommates about a fire evacuation plan and make sure all windows and doors can be opened and used as exits in an emergency.

**Hoping for a snow day or two... or three? Be prepared!**

Buy a snow shovel and other snow removal equipment, such as a few bags of rock salt to help melt ice, and keep your front walk and porch steps safe. Make arrangements for snow removal, if you are required to do so in your lease. Establish a plan with your roommates for shoveling your front walk and sidewalk in front of your house. Let your landlord know if gutters need to be cleared.

**Planning to host friends? Be mindful of neighbors!**

If you host a gathering, take steps to monitor guests’ behavior to keep noise levels at a minimum and end your party at a reasonable hour. Communicate with neighbors about your plans and provide contact information so they can reach you if needed. Identify one or two roommates as “house managers” any time you have friends over. They can manage guests, monitor noise, clean up the yard and surrounding area, and respond to phone calls or neighbor concerns.

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**Personal Safety at Night**

1. **Walk with another person or a group if possible!**
2. **If you must walk alone, stay in well lit and heavily trafficked areas.**
3. **If your light is on at night, people can see into your home unless you draw your curtains or blinds!**
4. **Have your keys ready before you get to your building or house.**
5. **Don’t be distracted with headphones. Be aware of your surroundings.**
My roommate and I want to find a new place to live off campus, but we aren’t sure how to go about it. Do you have any advice?

First, look at your lease. When does it expire? If you want to move out before your lease ends, you will likely have to pay a penalty for breaking the lease early. If you plan to move out, let your property owner know two to three months in advance.

Next, you and your roommate can begin searching for new properties. Lucky for you, we will be holding our annual Off-Campus Housing Fair on March 8th from 4-6pm! See page 2 for more information.

Once you and your roommate have found your new home, you will need to figure out how to move your belongings. Will you rent a truck? Borrow someone’s car? Bribe your friends with pizza? During your apartment search and move out/in, you will want to have a clear and open line of communication between yourself and the property.

I’m going to be gone for a month or two this summer. Do I still have to pay rent on my apartment? Are there any alternatives?

You always have to pay rent, even on break. You could look into subletting your apartment, but not all apartments allow residents to sublet or do Air B N B. If your property does allow subletting, check out this handy guide!

Got questions? Need a consultation? Email offcampushousing@american.edu
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY HOUSING & DINING PROGRAMS PRESENTS...

OFF-CAMPUS HOUSING FAIR

2017

MARCH 8TH, 2017
4pm to 6pm
MGC 2-5

Fair Snacks!

Door Prizes!

Spring Break Safety

Going away for spring break? Don’t forget to follow these home safety tips.

- Let someone in your building or neighborhood (property manager, neighbor, etc.) know you will be out of town. Ask them to call you if they see something out of the ordinary.
- Ask someone to collect your mail or place a hold on your mail delivery while you’re gone.
- Throw out any food which may expire while you are away.
- Before leaving, unplug your electronics and appliances.
- Take out your garbage and recycling.
- Lock your windows.
- Lock your door!

Have a safe and fun spring break!