



# PHILADELPHIA POLICE DEPARTMENT

## CITIZEN INFORMATION BULLETIN #3 LANDLORD-TENANT DISPUTES

1. A landlord or a landlord's agent can not evict or lock out a tenant without legal process. (WRIT OF POSSESSION) Without legal process such unlawful eviction practices include, but are not limited to:
  - A. Plugging, changing, adding or removing any lock or otherwise blocking access to a dwelling unit (lockouts).
  - B. Removing windows and doors from a dwelling unit.
  - C. Interfering with utility services to the dwelling unit such as electricity, gas, hot/cold water, heat, or telephone service.
  - D. Forcing a tenant to vacate by use of force or threat of violence or injury to a tenant's person or property.
  - E. Engaging in any activity or pattern of activity which renders a dwelling unit or any part thereof inaccessible to the tenant.
  - F. Failing to take reasonable and prompt action to restore access to a dwelling unit following any incident of landlord described above.
1. Whenever police are called to a dispute involving a possible landlord tenant problem police will:
  - a. Establish the identities (tenant/landlord relationship) of the parties involved. If the landlord is not present, attempt to contact him/her whenever practical.
  - b. Issue the "Tenant's Referral Notice" to all concerned parties and request parties to read same. (See below)
  - c. Verify that the landlord has followed the legal process by requiring the landlord to produce a copy of the Alias Writ of Possession. This is the legal document, signed by a Judge, necessary to effect an eviction.
2. If the landlord is unable to produce a copy of the Alias Writ of Possession:
  - a. Police will inform the tenant that he/she is entitled to regain possession of the premises immediately.

- b. Police personnel will inform the landlord or his/her agent to take prompt action to restore access to the dwelling unit or arrest the landlord for a violation of the applicable ordinance. The landlord **MUST** have a **WRIT OF POSSESSION** from Municipal Court in order to have a tenant lawfully evicted.

**NOTE:** Police personnel will not physically assist the tenant in regaining entry. Police will provide stand-by assistance while the tenant regains immediate entry to the dwelling unit.

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CITY OF PHILADELPHIA • POLICE DEPARTMENT  
**TENANT'S REFERRAL NOTICE**

Self-help eviction practices are actions by landlord or a landlord's agent taken without legal process to dispossess or attempt to dispossess a tenant from a dwelling unit or threatening to engage in any other conduct which prevents or is intended to prevent a tenant from lawfully occupying a dwelling unit. Self-help eviction practices include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Plugging, changing, adding or removing any lock or otherwise blocking access to a dwelling unit (lockouts).
2. Removing windows and doors from a dwelling unit.
3. Interfering with utility services to the dwelling unit such as electricity, gas, hot/cold water, heat, or telephone services.
4. Forcing a tenant to vacate by use of force or threat of violence or injury to a tenant's person or property.
5. Engaging in any activity or pattern of activity which renders a dwelling unit or any part thereof inaccessible to the tenant.
6. Failure to take prompt and reasonable action to restore access and habitability to a dwelling unit following any incident of the landlord conduct described above.

If you need further information, contact the following agencies.

Tenant Union Representative Network  
1315 Walnut Street  
(215) 940-3900

Community Legal Services  
1424 Chestnut Street  
(215) 981-3700

Office of Emergency Shelter & Services  
1315 Cherry Street  
(215) 686-5671

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