

THE ULTIMATE
REFERENCE
GUIDEBOOK



**ARMED FORCES
HOUSING ADVOCATES**
READINESS STARTS WITH A SAFE HOME



This guide shares common terminology and issues you will want to understand. This document will be periodically updated.

Term and Renewal

Lease terms can be a variety of lengths, the most common being one year. If you have a deal or a "special" rate lower than BAH, pay attention to your lease end date. If your lease is coming up on renewal and you do not sign a new one, it may go month-to-month. Going back to the housing company and asking them to renew at the lower "special" rate for the entire year lease is always an option. They may consider it, especially if your installation's occupancy rates are low. The same is also true if you are currently month-to-month or paying full BAH and coming up on renewal. Always ask if they have a special rate or deal before signing the new lease! If you want to move and need to give notice, ensure you are giving proper notification as outlined by your lease. They cannot charge you for breaking your lease terms if you move due to a billet change, falling under the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA). Still, they can if it is outside of those terms. The only exception is if it is due to a life and safety hazard in your home. If this is the case and you need assistance, please get in touch with one of our advocates.

Renters Insurance

Housing does not provide renters' coverage for their tenants, so you must purchase your coverage. Individual housing companies have their requirements for policy coverage. *AFHA highly advises all renters to have insurance policies to protect themselves and their property.*

This guide shares common terminology and issues you will want to understand. This document will be periodically updated.

Move-In Conditions

Take photos and videos upon move-in and email them to the housing company, along with a copy of the completed form provided to you, as part of your records to ensure your protection upon move-out. Check under and in all cabinets, utility closets, and HVAC closets, and make sure you have full access to all areas of your home. If you cannot access parts of your home, like the utility closet, ensure that maintenance unlocks that room and allows you to inspect and photograph that area. Also, make sure you have something in writing stating that you are not responsible for anything in the locked room since you do not have access to the contents.

Dislocation Policy

If repairs require displacement from home, a policy should be in place to accommodate families. The policy should include housing, per diem, food allowance, BAH stoppage or back payment, and utility/cable backpay. This policy should exist already and be readily available upon request.

Maintenance History

This is a right provided to military housing tenants under the Tenant Bill of Rights. Upon request, this should be provided to you and include at least seven years of maintenance history. If denied, get the denial in writing and contact one of our advocates immediately.

This guide shares common terminology and issues you will want to understand. This document will be periodically updated.

Asbestos

Request to see a HAZARD MAP of your home so you are aware of the locations of any lead-based paint- this ensures you know the exact location of lead-based paint and is mindful not to disturb it. If you do happen to disrupt the area, you can immediately report any necessary maintenance issues. According to the EPA, "deteriorating lead-based paint (peeling, chipping, chalking, cracking, damaged, or damp) is a hazard and needs immediate attention." Suppose you see paint like this in your home, built before 1978. In that case, AFHA recommends getting your children's blood lead levels tested to ensure they have not come into contact with lead or if you are pregnant. Only a certified company should handle lead-based paint, not just the standard maintenance employee.

**For more information on asbestos, visit the EPA website:
<https://www.epa.gov/asbestos-lead>.*

Perimeter Soil

Perimeter soil at some installations may house hazardous contaminants that adversely impact your health. If your lease warns not to disturb your perimeter soil, but you must maintain any landscape around your home, please clarify with your MHPI company what the best course of action is. If your perimeter soil is unsafe, you should not be required to keep your flower beds or weed your properties, as it would be dangerous.



This guide shares common terminology and issues you will want to understand. This document will be periodically updated.

Mold

Look in areas where mold/moisture would likely occur. Walk the home looking up at the ceilings and into the corners of every room. Pay extra attention to window sills and the tops above bathtubs and showers. Look beneath each sink faucet in the cabinet for signs of previous water leaks. If shower access panels are present, look inside the access door. Look for any discoloration on the floor surrounding each toilet, bathtub, and shower. Pull out or look under the dishwasher and refrigerator. Check the attic and basement rafters for signs of mold using a flashlight. Finally, look in each HVAC vent for signs of excessive condensation and mold growth. Sticking a cell phone inside the vent is easy while recording. If able, ask to inspect the coils of the HVAC unit for mold, debris, and dust.

Fire Safety and Carbon Monoxide Detectors

Upon move-in, test all fire alarms and carbon monoxide detectors. AFHA recommends that you inquire when the dryer vent was inspected and cleaned. Ask if any fireplaces are permitted and when they were examined and washed. Check all dates on fire extinguishers and smoke detectors.

Electrical

If your outlets are hot to the touch, sparking, or stop working without cause, please put in an emergency work order for electrical issues. If your outlets are burning, don't hesitate to contact your local fire department. Faulty wiring is dangerous and needs to be dealt with by professionals- certified electricians are required to perform most electrical work in most states.