

# Landlords, agents and tenants

Your responsibilities

## Beware carbon monoxide— it's a silent killer

You can't see it and you can't smell it, but if you have a gas heater in your home then you're at risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Carbon monoxide (CO) can be produced by faulty, unserviced gas heaters but it is easy to avoid. All gas heaters should be serviced at least every two years to reduce the risk.

Nine Victorians have died from this silent killer since 2000 and hundreds more have been admitted to hospitals with CO poisoning. The symptoms are often mistaken for the flu and include headaches, dizziness or nausea.

A good air supply and a well-maintained flue are essential to ensure gas appliances operate correctly.

Instantaneous gas water heaters, other than room-sealed types, in a bathroom or toilet are not permitted and should be replaced.

**Landlords should ensure gas heaters are serviced at least every two years and reported faults should be checked as a matter of urgency.**

## Tip

Before you sign a lease, you may consider requesting a condition/clause be added requiring the landlord to undertake to have any gas appliances checked and certified safe every two years.

For further information go to [www.esv.vic.gov.au](http://www.esv.vic.gov.au) or phone ESV on **1800 800 158**.

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Creating a safer state with electricity and gas



# Your responsibilities

Landlords and agents share responsibility for ensuring gas and electricity supply and appliances are safe in rented premises.

The *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* requires a landlord to ensure that rented accommodation is maintained in “good repair”. This includes all gas and electrical appliances provided by the landlord, which must be safe to use and properly maintained.

Failure to ensure gas and electric appliances are properly installed or correctly maintained according to the manufacturer’s instructions could not only potentially kill or harm the tenants, but could cause significant property damage and expose the landlord to civil liability and potentially costly litigation. There might also be unintended impacts on the landlord’s insurance if injury or damage is found to have been caused by poorly serviced or unsafe appliances.

The landlord and agent should ensure safety checks are done at rented premises at agreed intervals, which Energy Safe Victoria (ESV) recommends should be once every two years.

Managing agents could have legal exposures if they do not proactively warn landlords of the possible consequences of inadequate maintenance.

ESV recommends that landlords ensure gas heaters and water heaters are serviced every two years, while cookers should be maintained as needed. When faults are reported, they should be checked as a matter of urgency.

**It is illegal and dangerous for unqualified people to perform electrical or gas work around the home.**

A registered electrical contractor must be engaged to carry out electrical work around your property. Ensure the electrician has a licence issued by ESV. A Certificate of Electrical Safety must be issued when the work is complete.

If the electrician refuses to show their licence or issue a Certificate of Electrical Safety, notify ESV on **1800 800 158**.

Gas appliances can only be repaired, serviced or installed by tradespeople authorised by the Plumbing Industry Commission (PIC).

Not all plumbers are authorised to do gas installation or servicing work. You can check by phoning the PIC on **1300 815 127**.

## Landlords—your responsibilities

- Ensure only licensed people do all gasfitting and electrical work.
- Before re-letting, ensure all appliances are safe and any unsafe appliance is repaired or removed.
- Ensure electrical appliances are cleaned regularly in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions. Particular attention should be paid to dust build-up on cooling fan inlets and all parts of heaters.
- Check electrical appliances for damage to plugs, leads and casings that may expose live parts or cause a fire.
- Ensure electrical wiring, socket outlets and switches are maintained in a safe condition.
- Ensure all gas appliances, pipework and flue systems are maintained in a safe condition.
- Ensure all ventilation openings are clear and unobstructed.
- Ensure all pipes are sealed correctly if an appliance has been removed.
- Record all safety checks and details of work carried out on a gas or electrical installation.
- Flue systems must be examined regularly, especially those related to decorative gas log fires, internal hot water heaters and space heaters. Flue terminals must be checked to ensure they are not blocked and are vermin-proof.
- Burning or discolouration on the front or above a space or water heater indicates a problem and must be checked immediately.
- Air vents must not be blocked or covered.
- Piping systems should be checked every five years or whenever a new or replacement appliance is installed. Galvanised steel installations should be checked more frequently.
- Respond immediately to any request from your tenant to fix a gas leak, or any other urgent repair listed under the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997*. If you don’t respond to them immediately, they can authorise an urgent repair of up to \$1800, for which you must reimburse them. More information about this is available at [consumer.vic.gov.au/renting](http://consumer.vic.gov.au/renting).

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## Tenants—your responsibilities

Tenants are responsible for using appliances according to instructions and should immediately report any faults to the landlord or agent.

- Use appliances appropriately.
- Allow reasonable access for the landlord’s contractor to carry out gas and electricity safety checks.
- Report any fault or malfunction to the landlord or agent.
- Stop using any appliance that is obviously faulty.
- Do not use damaged appliances—they can cause fires and injuries.
- Do not illegally install, remove or tamper with any gas or electrical appliance.
- Do not use multiple or cascaded power boards as a substitute for permanent socket outlets.
- Ensure that portable heaters are kept away from combustible materials including washing, paper, blankets and curtains.
- When replacing electrical fuses or fuse wire, use the specified rating only. Oversized fuses may cause the fixed wiring to fail resulting in electric shock or fire.
- Before you sign a lease, you may consider requesting a condition/clause be added requiring the landlord to undertake to have any gas appliances checked and certified safe every two years.

