



# 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's Action Group of Philadelphia  
21 S. 12th Street  
(215) 575-0700

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

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

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