

# FROM Homeowner TO Landlord

Whether it was in their plans or not, some homeowners are taking on a second job as landlord.

**“By educating yourself about landlord tenant law, you can avoid legal problems.”**

by Susan Thomas Springer,  
for *The Bulletin*  
Advertising Department

A growing number of homeowners have found themselves in a job they may not have anticipated. The situation dubbed “the accidental landlord” is occurring more often in Central Oregon.

A job loss, a new job requiring relocation or other economic challenges can get people thinking of options they hadn’t considered before.

Other homeowners may be planning to sell their homes but choose to wait until they feel the timing is better.

Whatever the reason, local rental experts say they’ve seen an increase in first-time landlords. They encourage these new landlords to learn the ropes in order to keep the process smooth for themselves and their tenants.

#### Fix It

First, homeowners need to make an honest assessment of their home’s condition. Repairs must be made to things such as heaters and appliances if they don’t function properly.

“They have to provide systems that work,” said Dianne Willis, principle broker with ReMax Sunset Realty. “A renter needs to be happy there.”

Once the home is ready to rent, it’s a good idea to take pictures inside and out to avoid future disagreements about the home’s condition when a tenant leaves.

#### Learn the Law

Oregon’s Residential Landlord and Tenant Act may make for dry reading, but it contains important information about the rights of both landlords and tenants.

Bob Lovlien, attorney with Bryant Lovlien & Jarvis, recommends being familiar with that law. Also, Lovlien says homeowners need to negotiate the terms of a lease using a good rental agreement form.

“The Stevens-Ness form is well-accepted in the industry,” Lovlien said. “People have come to rely on it.”

Stevens-Ness Law Publishing Company sells a variety of legal forms including those used by landlords such as rental agreements, tenant applications and payment notices.

Kevin Restine with Plus Property Management explained that homeowners who become landlords need to be aware of their tenants’ rights. One common problem, Restine pointed out, is homeowners sometimes don’t realize they need to provide proper legal notice to a tenant before entering their house—even though they own it.

“By educating yourself about landlord tenant law, you can avoid legal problems,” Restine said.

#### Screen Tenants Carefully

Professional rental managers say one of the biggest worries for landlords is finding qualified tenants who will leave the property in good

condition and pay their rent on time. To overcome that worry, do a thorough background check.

“One of our primary goals is to return the property in the best condition possible,” said Restine.

Willis said potential renters can visit her company’s Web site and provide information which allows them to run both a credit report and a criminal background check. In addition, her company interviews past landlords and checks tenants’ work history.

#### Hire a Professional

While it’s possible to be a successful landlord on your own, many people appreciate being free from the headaches that can come with the job. Professional property management companies charge fees, typically a percentage of each month’s rent, to provide a full range of services for the homeowner.

“They don’t want to get that call in the dead of winter at midnight saying the water heater went out,” Restine said.

“Do your homework,” Willis said. “Shop around a couple companies and see who offers the best service.”

She adds that it’s especially helpful to hire a professional if the homeowner is moving out of the area.



#### Public RESOURCES:

**Stevens-Ness Law Publishing Company** has been providing legal forms for 90 years. Forms are available for purchase online at [www.stevens-ness.com](http://www.stevens-ness.com).

**Central Oregon Rental Home Owners Association (COROA)** provides monthly classes on topics including updates to rental law, evictions, screening tenants and tax advice. [www.centraleregonrentalowners.org](http://www.centraleregonrentalowners.org)

**The Oregon State Bar Landlord and Tenant Law Resource Page** is an on-line resource with answers to the most common landlord/tenant questions. Please note that the general information provided should not be used as a substitute for specific legal advice. [www.osbar.org/public/legalinfo/tenant.html](http://www.osbar.org/public/legalinfo/tenant.html)