

## Law: Co-tenants share liability

■ Continued from Page 3B

the landlord is taking any deposits or fees, ask what they're for. If the written agreement doesn't say what they're for, add an explanation and have it initialed by all parties.

5) **Roommates.** Review the roommate survival manual down at the Rental Information Office (or look at their home page: <http://oregon.uoregon.edu/~rio/>)

Understand that co-tenants are jointly and severally liable for things. That means that if one of you flakes out, skips town, or burns the house down, the landlord can sue whichever tenant has the most money for what his or her co-tenant did.

Understand also that co-tenants are "co-adventurers." That means that if you vacate during the middle of a lease term, you still owe your co-tenants your share of the rent until they replace you.

And they don't have to replace you at all if they can't find a new person with whom they get along.

6) **Move-in inventory.** Do one! See move-out inventory above. Do a move-in inventory to protect yourself from being charged at the end of the tenancy for problems that existed when you moved in.

One common complaint I hear is, "My landlord's charging me \$300 for cleaning.

But I cleaned before I moved out, and the place was a pigsty when I moved in."

Technically, you're only liable if you don't return the premises as clean as you received them. The problem arises when there is documentation of the premises condition at the end of the tenancy, but not at the beginning.

Do an inventory at commencement. Be thorough. Be picky. Get the landlord to sign it. **KEEP A COPY!**

If anything is dirty enough or broken enough that it will show up in a picture, take a picture. If you have to spend time cleaning, keep a log of your time and receipts for any cleaning expenses.

Send the landlord a letter noting these expenditures of time and money noting that you will want them taken into account at the end of the tenancy during the deposit refund process.

7) **Complaints/Repair Requests.** Whenever you make one, confirm it with a written note, and keep a copy of it. Experience has shown that verbal requests are not acted on as promptly as written ones.

*John Davidson is an attorney in the ASUO Legal Services office. Legal Services provides advice and representation to university students on a wide range of legal issues — including landlord/tenant disputes.*

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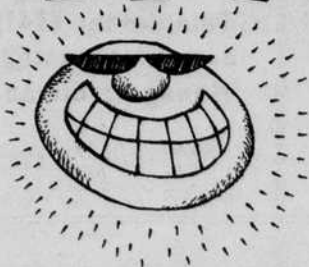


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