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...think about it!

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Apartment tenant discusses unpleasant rental experience

For many students, the first rental experience can be exciting and liberating. Getting away from the dorms or parents' homes is what almost every student strives for. What many students do not know about are the numerous problems and situations that can arise from renting an apartment in the University area.

From roach and bug infestations to broken or rusted pipes and high prices, the University rental area is considered by some to be the worst place to rent in Eugene. My current apartment rental has left me with more than just a few problems to deal with.

The one-bedroom apartment I rented from a management company that shall remain nameless came with the high price tag of \$425 a month and has left me wondering if I will ever rent again. When I moved in, I paid the \$100 cleaning fee, expecting my carpets to be cleaned.

They were not cleaned until the middle of my tenancy, and they were cleaned only because I was becoming ill from the smell of harsh chemicals. I spent two hours moving my furniture and belongings out of the way, and then I had to put everything back after the carpets were cleaned.

Often a harsh chemical smell is a sign of a methamphetamine lab. But if you suspect your apartment was once a haven for drug production, don't expect any help from the Eugene Police. My first suspicions came when I found a small baggie full of broken vials with a strange substance and a small green leaf inside a small cabinet in my kitchen. Obviously my \$100 cleaning fee was a waste of money.

I also have the pleasure of living across the street from a fraternity house. The nightly parties have left me sleepless on a number of occasions.

Structural problems may also be a problem with some campus-area apartments. My apartment is situated between two metal staircases. Every five minutes, my apartment has an earthquake of about 5.3 on the Richter scale. Other apartments in the area tend to have weak ceilings and water damage.

One morning I awoke to find a pool of water and broccoli in my bathtub. I had lived in the apartment for a month and had never eaten broccoli.

After my apartment manager attempted to fix it with a plunger and failed, he called a plumber, who took three hours to get the water to go back down. The pipes were so badly plugged with debris and rust that it took two water pumps to alleviate the problem.

One broken door lock, one broken

shower lever, one leaking sink and a stuck fixture later, I am still living in fear of my own apartment. For the last few months I have been ingesting yellow water from my kitchen sink. Not voluntarily, of course. The management attempted to blame EWEB for the problem, but I had EWEB come out and test the water to the tune of \$20.

According to EWEB, the water is fine, but the pipes are rusted. After I notified the management of the situation, they told me that the problem had happened before and that they had already done what they could by replacing the water heater when the previous tenant had lived there. They told me they would have to rip my cupboard out to replace the pipes. That was the last I had heard from the management

until I called them earlier this week.

My manager told me that the problem, to her knowledge, had been fixed. I had to laugh at that simply because it had been a month since I had last heard from them, and my cupboards had never been torn apart.



Autumn De Poe

For students who wish to know more about what they can do to be reimbursed for time spent away from an apartment due to repairs, or what duties property managers are supposed to take care of, OSPERG has compiled a Renter's Rights Handbook. Anybody who is currently renting or plans to rent in the future should obtain this handbook immediately.

Despite all of the problems one may encounter, there are solutions. Keeping track of all receipts, problems and time spent avoiding your apartment will help if you ever need to litigate.

Asking friends and family about managers' reputations may also help. Taking the time to do research on the area into which you would like to move will help to make you feel safer and more confident about your housing.

Until better housing regulations are enacted and followed, the housing situations on campus may not change.

But if students are aware of what their rights are and what they can do to change their living environments, they may someday protest the "slums" on campus, boycott the worst housing violators and fight to make the area a little bit more pleasant to live in.

Autumn De Poe, a junior majoring in journalism, is a reporter for the Emerald. Her views do not necessarily reflect those of the paper.

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