

the finePRINT

Details such as contracts and renters' insurance are important aspects of moving to a new place and protecting personal property

BY AARON BURKHALTER
FREELANCE REPORTER

As fall approaches, so do throngs of students brought in by the start of the new school year. In the daily grind of starting new classes, meeting new colleagues and preparing for the rest of the year, it's difficult to keep track of all the necessary details of renting an apartment.

The city of Eugene houses approximately 55,000 renters, half of whom are students, said Brett Rowlett, Oregon Student Association campus organizer. That means hundreds of students will be looking for housing this fall and digging through the fine print of leases and rental agreements.

Rental agreements can dense and confusing, but they explain what the landlord offers for the renter and the renter's responsibilities to the property. It's a legally binding contract that deserves careful attention.

Scott Lu, ASUO member and last year's community housing coordinator, warns students to carefully review rental agreements. Pay attention to the lease, and make sure to understand what everything means, he said.

"If there are any questionable things be sure to ask the landlord," Lu said.

Landlords frequently show potential tenants a room identical to the actual available room. Lu said students should insist on seeing the actual unit before signing a lease.

Lu reminds students leaving apartments that when they originally signed their rental

lease, they may have paid first and last month's rent. Students often forget this, Lu said, and end up paying the last month's rent twice.

Students should also keep track of any deposits they paid to the landlord. The landlord is required to return damage and cleaning deposits with an itemized account of what needs replacing or cleaning, and how much it costs, Lu said.

The ASUO and OSPIRG both provide information for new renters, and checklists of things to remember when looking for an apartment are available at the EMU.

In the state of Oregon, landlords are required by law to meet basic habitability standards. Basic principles of a habitable house include structural integrity, heating, plumbing and weatherproofing. Landlords are required to have these basic features in tact when renting out a house or apartment.

Occasionally landlords don't keep up their buildings, putting renters in the difficult position of pressuring landlords to repair the problem. Fortunately for renters, Eugene recently enacted a new policy to help tenants and landlords keep rented units up to date.

Previously, if there was a problem with an apartment, and a landlord failed to fix it, a tenant's only option was to withhold rent and file suit against the landlord, which takes time and money, and it is possible that a case will

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