

Policy Number: 24

Policy Name: Maintenance (*replaces Policy 24 – 1 Maintenance Policy non-standard*)

Version No. 05

Established: 2002

Present Version Passed: 12/4/2022

Next Scheduled Review: 2023

PURPOSE

NGRHC recognises that its managed properties will require maintenance. Such maintenance may be defined as urgent or non-urgent, standard or non-standard and cyclical or upgrade. The cost of maintenance is not automatically the responsibility of NGRHC and may also be determined by actions, behavior or lack of due care by renter-members and their households (including visitors to the home).

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Define a set of clear guidelines for maintenance work requests;
- Outline a standard procedure to be followed for maintenance requests which consider environmentally sustainable and cost effective options;
- Outline procedure and guidelines relating to renter-member caused damage; and
- Outline guidelines relating to alterations to property.

RELEVANT CO-OPERATIVE OBJECTIVES

Housing Registrar Performance Standards for Registered Housing Providers and The Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (RTA, also known as the Act).

SCOPE

This policy affects all renter-members of the NGRHC and shall not contravene The RTA. The Act dictates the responsibilities of the Co-op in regards to all matters around maintenance.

This policy will be amended should there be any changes to the Act, and the Act always remains the overarching guideline.

This policy applies to the following topics in the housing program implemented by NGRHC:

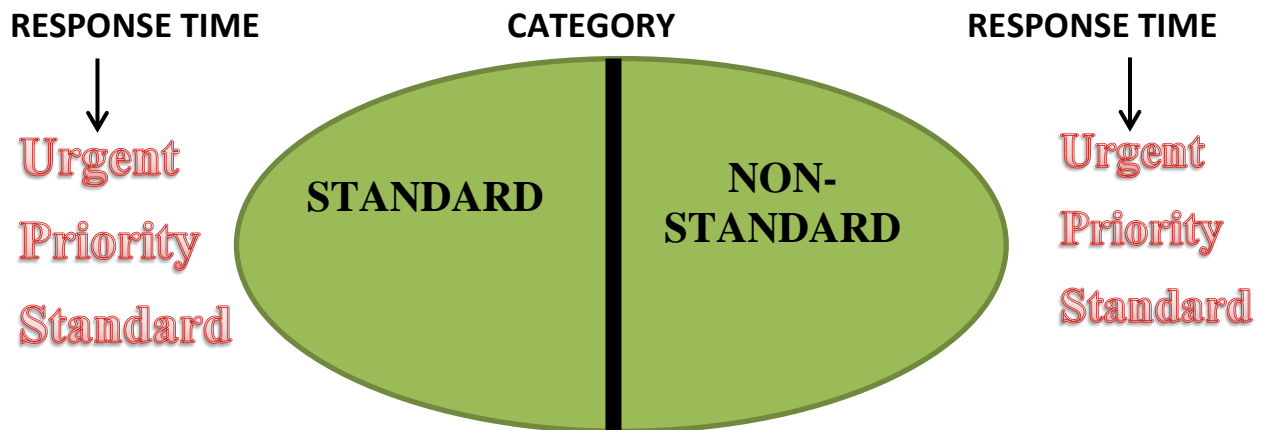
- Classification of maintenance
- Damage caused by a renter-member
- Modifications
- Procedures
- Repair Charges Guidelines
- Maintenance Guidelines
- Asbestos removal
- Termite and Pests control
- Mould

POLICY STATEMENT

NGRHC carries out maintenance on all of the Co-op's properties to ensure the best possible standards are maintained for renter-members and that the values of the properties are also kept to the highest possible level. Environmentally sustainable products will be considered in all maintenance work.

NGRHC carries out all maintenance in accordance with the Residential Tenancies Act 1997.

The following diagram shows how maintenance is classified.



Standard Maintenance

Standard Maintenance is day-to-day maintenance that occurs in relation to standard items within the property. The Co-op's response time to maintenance depends on the classification given which include: urgent, priority or standard.

Within its budget constraints NGRHC will perform all standard maintenance as per our responsibility as a Residential Rental Provider under the Residential Tenancies Act 1997.

NGRHC will endeavour to have all standard maintenance completed within 14 days, unless under extraordinary circumstances.

Examples of Standard Non Urgent Maintenance include:

- Replacement of light fittings
- Rewiring of fly wire screen to door or window
- Repair of cabinet shelves or door handles
- Repairs of general wear and tear

Non-Standard Maintenance

Non-Standard maintenance is the repair, upgrade or replacement of items/furnishings not considered to be standard household fixtures/items. The Co-op's response time to this maintenance also depends on the classification given which include: urgent, priority or standard.

NGRHC will endeavour to have all non- standard maintenance completed within 14 days, unless under extraordinary circumstances.

Examples of Non-Standard maintenance include:

- Air conditioners
- Garages
- Pergolas
- Antennas (not including a booster if required)
- Awnings
- Dishwashers

Renter-members are **not** permitted to install, alter or remove fixtures and fittings without the express written consent of the NGRHC Asset Management Sub-Committee.

Any costs to rectify unauthorised alterations made to properties by renter-members or individuals from the renter-members household that do not comply with local by-laws or do not have the required permit will be the responsibility of the renter-member.

Priority Maintenance

Maintenance which is non urgent standard or non-standard might be categorised as priority maintenance.

NGRHC will endeavor to have all priority maintenance completed within 3 business days, unless under extraordinary circumstances.

Examples of Priority maintenance include:

- Replacement of stove element
- Dripping tap
- Leaking cistern
- Repairs to front and rear security doors
- Repairs/adjustment of external door locks.

Urgent Maintenance

Maintenance of an urgent nature which impacts on a renter-members safety or wellbeing is considered to be urgent.

NGRHC will endeavor to have all urgent maintenance completed or made safe within 24 hours of receiving the renter-members urgent maintenance request.

Examples of Urgent Maintenance include:

- A blocked or broken toilet
- A serious roof leak
- A gas leak
- Dangerous electrical fault
- Serious storm, flood or fire damage
- Failure of gas, electricity or water supply to the premises
- A fault or damage that causes the premises to be unsafe or insecure to persons on the property.

Cyclical or Upgrade Maintenance

In conjunction with the annual business plan, the asset management plan and the Act, NGRHC will undertake maintenance of its properties on a cyclical basis according to the priorities set out in those plans.

Examples of Cyclical or Upgrade Maintenance include:

- Heater Servicing – Bi-annually (every two years while still operational)
- Gas safety check Bi-annually in conjunction with the gas heater service (regardless of if there is a gas heater, other items to be checked include hot water services and gas cookers, while still operational)
- Electrical safety check Bi-annually in conjunction with the split system servicing, other items to be checked include power points, electricity meter and lighting.
- Split systems – **filter needs regular cleaning by members**; Bi annual service by the NGRHC contracted service provider. (as stated in the Asset Management Policy, **smoking is banned inside NGRHC properties**. Tar build up in split systems will limit the working life of these appliances, any cost resulting from damage will be passed onto the renter-member)
- Smoke detectors shall be checked annually by NGRHC appointed contractor AND at the time of routine inspections. If found to be faulty or over 10 years old a work order will be raised for replacement with an approved DHHS model.
- Gutter Cleaning (Bi-annually between the months of April to June on properties identified as requiring this service) ** Please note that if you see that your gutter needs

cleaning and it is not the scheduled cleaning time, inform a member of staff and they will arrange gutter cleaning.

- Fences (replace or repair)
- Bathroom and Kitchen renovations (as per asset planning schedule and budget capabilities). (If you want to know when your upgrade is due please check with staff).
- Carpets and floor coverings
- Painting

Maintenance, over a certain value, as stipulated in the General Lease, must be approved by Homes Vic before work commences.

NGRHC in conjunction with Homes Vic require that all gas appliances are to be phased out to achieve net zero emission targets by 2050. NGRHC is committed to remove gas appliances as they fail or need to be repaired. During the phasing out period NGRHC guarantees that all properties managed or owned by the co-op will have sufficient heating and cooling.

Vacated Maintenance

An end of tenancy poses the ideal opportunity to assess the overall maintenance and upgrade needs of a property. Maintenance is more easily carried out when a property is vacant and NGRHC aims to seize this opportunity to carry out Cyclical and Upgrade maintenance wherever possible.

The vacated maintenance will be in accordance with the annual business plan and the asset management plan.

Vacated maintenance may include but is not limited to the following:

Vacated Maintenance Guidelines

- Window dressings
- Commercial clean
- Lighting upgrade
- Painting
- Oven and range hood replacement
- Bathroom
- Wardrobes and cupboards
- Power points (all double as a minimum)
- Smoke detectors
- Carpet or vinyl
- Garden and surrounds
- Windows
- Fly screens.

Damage caused by a Renter-member

If any required maintenance is found to be the renter-member's responsibility, due to damage or neglect, the renter-member shall repay all costs associated with any such repair or replacement to rectify damage.

Disability modifications

In order to ascertain if a property requires any disability modifications, members should first seek a referral from their medical practitioner to an occupational therapist for assessment of their needs.

POLICIES & PROCEDURES OF THE NORTHERN GEELONG RENTAL HOUSING CO-OPERATIVE LTD

If it is found that the members property requires minor modifications (including grab rails either situated outside and inside) the member shall supply the Co-operative with the report produced by the occupational therapist. NGRHC will seek recovery of costs from appropriate funding sources (at the time) before works go ahead.

PROCEDURES

All requests for maintenance work must be communicated to the NGRHC staff, either by telephone or in writing.

It is the responsibility of NGRHC staff to ensure that the requested maintenance is carried out according to the requirements under the Residential Tenancies Act (the Act) and within the time frames required by DHHS.

NGRHC staff will issue an order to an appropriate approved contractor/tradesperson, indicating also whether the maintenance order is urgent, priority or standard.

If such maintenance is a result of renter-member damage or neglect an invoice for the costs incurred will be issued to the renter-member for reimbursement to NGRHC.

PROCEDURES – REMOVAL OF GAS APPLIANCES

When a gas appliance fails either a safety check or during normal operations the appliance will be removed under the requirement for NGRHC to do so. The process will be communicated to the renter-member and include such information as when, where, why and how. Costs for repair and replacement/removal of appliances will be NGRHC's responsibility unless, there is a connection to renter-member damage.

PROCEDURES – NON-URGENT

All maintenance requests will be emailed to the appropriate tradesperson after being recorded in the NGRHC approved software.

Non-standard maintenance requires 2 quotes before proceeding with work.

Upon completion of the maintenance all details of the work performed will be entered into the NGRHC data base and staff shall conduct a quality assurance check.

PROCEDURES – URGENT

All urgent maintenance requests will be reported to NGRHC staff as soon as the maintenance issue arises, during office hours.

If the urgent maintenance is required outside of office hours the renter-member shall contact the after-hours emergency contractor directly.

All standard urgent work maintenance shall be initially attended to within 24 hours of the renter-member contact.

Upon completion of the maintenance all details of the work performed will be entered into the NGRHC data base and staff shall conduct a quality assurance check.

If any renter-member believes that the NGRHC is not meeting its legal obligations as defined by the RTA the renter-member is encouraged to voice their concerns either to staff or directly to the Committee of Management.

PROCEDURES – RENTER-MEMBER CAUSED DAMAGE

The Residential Tenancies Act (The Act) outlines the rights and duties of the renter-member and the Co-op (the landlord) which forms the basis of this policy.

If NGRHC considers that the renter-member has breached their responsibilities as outlined in the Residential Rental Agreement or in this or any other applicable policy, NGRHC may seek to recover the costs to repair the damage.

When the Co-op is notified of damage or if damage is discovered and the said damage is caused by the renter-member or other related parties, the Co-op shall give the renter-member the opportunity to obtain their own quotes from reputable contractors to repair damage.

The renter-member must submit these quotes to the Co-op for approval before any work is carried out. If work has not been carried out in a tradesman-like manner within a reasonable time, staff shall issue the renter-member with a “notice to renter of rented premises.”

<https://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/resources-and-tools/forms-and-publications>

Should the Co-op need to complete the required repairs under section 79 (2) (The Act) staff shall issue a “notice to renter of rented premises” and the renter-member is liable to the rental provider for the reasonable costs of repairs.

An SMS message will be sent to renter-members when a maintenance order has been raised. If a renter-member fails to respond to contractors calls or messages regarding access to the property 3 times the work order will be rejected by the contractor and sent back to NGRHC staff. At that time, the work order will be re dated and the cycle will commence again. Should this situation continue to occur a breach of duty notice may be issued to the renter-member.

Determining responsibility for damage to the premises

To determine who is responsible for the cost of repairing damage to the premises NGRHC will ensure the process is fair, timely and evidence based by:

- Inspecting the premises and documenting the damage where appropriate
- Taking into account the condition of the premises at the beginning of the tenancy, as stated in the Property Condition Report and any evidence of work undertaken on the property
- Taking into account damage due to fair wear and tear, which NGRHC is responsible to repair
- Taking into account damage due to an emergency situation where there was good cause to believe that the renter-member’s health and wellbeing was at risk
- Considering whether the damage is a result of criminal activity such as family violence, break and enter or vandalism. In these cases a Police Report should be supplied by the renter-member.

Prior to taking any action in relation to damage to the premises/tenancy breaches, NGRHC will investigate and confirm the renter-members responsibility for the damage, including discussing the matter with the renter-member. NGRHC will consider the human rights impact on individuals before determining whether to issue a tenancy breach relevant to the level of damage at the property.

Repair Charges Guidelines

Repair charges for damage and repairs will be sought from renter-members in the following circumstances: (examples include but are not limited to)

- Intentional damage to the property
 - Alterations being made without approval
 - Punctured internal cabinets, doors and walls
 - Ripped fly screens
 - Sewer and/or drainage blockages caused by items flushed down the toilet
 - Cigarette smoke damage to walls and ceilings
- Neglectful and accidental damage
 - Broken and damaged clotheslines and hoists through misuse
 - Broken windows if damage is due to circumstances that are within the members control
 - Burns or other damage to carpets
 - Mould removal
- Compliance and third party instructions
 - A direction from council by-laws (e.g. hoarding, height of grass)
 - A direction from Victoria Police
- Conclusion of tenancy
 - Broken locks
 - Missing keys
 - Removal of abandoned furniture, vehicles, appliances or personal effects.

Should the Co-op pay for repairs which the renter-member is responsible for, staff will supply receipts and any other evidence of the repairs completed. A maintenance repayment agreement shall be negotiated with the renter-member based on individual circumstances and the relevant payment options will be advised.

Maintenance Guidelines

NGRHC strives to standardise maintenance tasks by using identified makes and models, styles and colours when maintenance is required. The following table explains the 'go to' identified practice to follow.

Maintenance Guidelines

Examples of Maintenance

Identified practice to follow

Hot Water Service	Replace with Instantaneous gas HWS if house has not been identified for redevelopment, OR , if funding is available a preference will be given to solar (electric boosted) hot water services
Vinyl Planks	Choice of 3 colours as per sample palette in the office
Disability Bathrooms	Industrial grade vinyl with ‘capped and cove’ edges to wrap up the wall.
Carpet replacement	Choice of 3 colours as per sample palette in the office.
Painting	Choice of 2 colours as per sample palette in the office for interior and 3 Colourbond colours for outside.(Paperbark, Dune, Basalt or Windspray)
Tiling	Choice of 2 colours as per sample palette in the office
Power Points	Replace existing 2 point power outlets with quad power outlets in lounges and kitchens where possible (if replaced due to a fault)
Fences	Replace with Colourbond if visible to general public and gives value to the property. Final decision will be made by Asset Committee.
Gates	Double gates are to be fitted with wheels (to support the weight of the gates) if the ground is stable, i.e.. Concreted or suitable for wheels to run over.
Trees	When large trees are cut down they will be replaced with 2 smaller (space appropriate) native species trees. Applicable tree plantings are necessary from an environmental perspective.
Plants	Only native plants will be sourced when replacing shrubs/plants that have died.
Heaters	Fixed gas or electric heaters are to be phased out with other gas appliances as they need repair or fail to pass a safety check. All gas heaters are to be replaced by split systems
Barriers	Where tree/shrub planting has failed in creating a barrier to stop renter-members parking in areas use hardwood posts and chain to segregate areas.
Shower Walls	Wilsonart – Carrara Ice design
Shower Head	Methven WELS 3 Star 9L/min Maha Rail Shower available at Bunnings
Split Systems	Inverter models – Heating and Cooling – High wall mounted on exterior of building. Inspection of site to be carried out to determine correct size and positioning of unit
Cooking appliances	Stove – Westinghouse WFE642SC also known as stand alone electric cooker 60cm Cooktop – Westinghouse WHC643BC Hot Plate 60cm Oven – Westinghouse WVE616SC oven Stainless Steel 60cm Rangehood – Westinghouse WRR604SB slide out rangehood S.Steel
Light Fittings	Replace with LED lighting when possible to do so
Exhaust Fans	IXL 250mm Eco Ventflo Exhaust fan

Standard Inclusions list - Bathroom Upgrade

Item	Preference - Make and Model
Exhaust fan	IXL 250mm Eco Ventflo Exhaust fan (stop backdraft)
Lighting	LED lighting
Mirror	Polished edge mirror 900mm x 900mm
Painting	Choice of 2 colours as per sample palette in the office.
Power Points	Double power points situated in bathroom according to safety regulations
Robe Hooks	2 Robe hooks to be fitted behind bathroom door
Shaving Cabinet	According to bathroom requirements
Shower	900mm x 900mm framed
Shower Base	900mm x 900mm
Shower head	Methven WELS 3 Star 9L/min Maha Rail Shower available at Bunnings
Shower taps	Flick mixer
Shower walls/lining	Wilsonart – Carrara Ice design
Soap holder	Fitted in shower
Tiling	Grey or Cream palette
Vinyl flooring	Industrial grade vinyl with 'capped and cove' edges to wrap up the wall.
Towel Rail	Double Towel rail
Vanity	Custom made
Vanity taps	Flick mixer

ASBESTOS REMOVAL

NGRHC understands that asbestos has been identified as a material which has been linked with serious illnesses (such as 'asbestosis') and cancer (such as mesothelioma). This material is a strong and fireproof silicate-mineral fibre that becomes brittle ('friable') with age, and pollutes air and water as extremely fine particles. Asbestos is found in certain acoustic ceiling tiles, insulation, patching compounds, roofing shingles, texture paints and vinyl flooring.

Only an authorised and accredited asbestos removal contractor may be engaged when it has been identified that there may be asbestos present in a property. All identified asbestos should be removed by this contractor if it is recommended to do so by their expert advice OR the asbestos is damaged in any way.

TERMITE AWARENESS

Subterranean termites or "white-ants" are a highly destructive timber pest, causing major structural timber damage to domestic and commercial buildings in Victoria. NGRHC aims to build awareness so that the Co-op might protect properties and engage renter-members to 'look out' for the signs of termite infestation.

There are many things renter-members can do to help prevent termites in Co-op properties.

- Reduce all soil-to-wood contact around the house.
- Remove all timber, wood, plants, mulch, paper, cardboard, etc., from around the foundations.
- Create a 6-inch barrier between mulch and the house.
- Keep plants a few feet away from the house for the best termite prevention, this also allows termite tubes or damage to be discovered earlier.
- Make sure downpipes empty into the drainage system and that your soil drainage is effective in minimising overly moist soil.
- Report leaky taps so they can be fixed and eliminate other sources of excess moisture, as that creates perfect conditions for termite invasions.
- During swarming season (after the winter as temperatures rise), turn off outdoor lights at night.
- Use pine needles instead of mulch. Pine needles are less appetising to subterranean termites and will also help minimise the environment that other insects such as ants like to nest in as well. If pine needles are not available consider pea gravel or other non-organic material as a barrier between the house and mulch.
- If there is a crawl space underneath the house, ensure there is proper ventilation to help minimise moisture from reaching the floor joists and subfloor. Moisture not only can be an encouraging condition for termites under the house, it can also cause wood destroying fungus to grow.

Proper identification is essential: It is essential for a professional pest controller to properly identify the species of termite found in a property. Some species of termites prefer living trees and will not attack dry seasoned timbers in a building, whilst others can be highly destructive to buildings in a short amount of time. IF a renter-member has any concerns around possible termite infestation please contact the office immediately.



Other Pests and Infestations

Pests and infestations may include but are not limited to:

- Mice
- Rats
- Possums
- Fleas
- Ants

The Residential Tenancies Act 1997 does not say who is responsible for dealing with infestations in a rented home, however, there are some guidelines around who will pay for exterminating or removing pests. This may depend on:

- If the pests were already a problem when the renter-member moved in; or
- If the renter-member contributed to the problem. For example, if pets or a build-up of rubbish is attracting the pests, the landlord could serve a Breach of duty notice and require the tenant-member to arrange for the extermination of the pests.

Where renter-members have breached their duty of care and do not rectify the situation, the costs of pest infestation correction will be passed onto the renter-member.

INITIAL ACTIONS – Renter-member responsibilities – Pest control

- Undertake a survey around your property regularly and remove any sources of food, water and rubbish. Look for places where mice/rats can nest in the yard including sheds and garages. For example, sheets of roofing iron stacked against the fence, wood/timber, old mattresses, furniture, white goods, car bodies or animal shelters all make wonderful homes for pests.
- Dispose of old furniture and rubbish
- If there are any signs of mouse/rat activity (usually when the weather turns colder) purchase rat/mice baits (wax blocks) or bait stations and place in areas of activity. **Make sure these baits are out of reach of children and other animals! They are poisonous to all creatures great and small!** The baits can be thrown into ceiling space and/or under the property via access holes.
- Clean up and declutter if required
- Inspect around the house for gaps or holes where mice/rats can enter. Any gaps around pipes need to be reported to NGRHC for maintenance.
- Make sure there is no firewood or untreated timber stacked on the ground close to the house
- Make sure animal food and faeces is cleaned up daily (this will also cut down on the number of flies around your home)
- Make sure compost piles and bins are regularly turned and compacted to prevent rats/mice nesting.

NGRHC Responsibilities

- During inspections advise renter-members to dispose of any accumulation of rubbish or chattels which will harbor rats/mice. A Breach of Duty notices gives renter-members 14 days to comply and remove this rubbish to avoid further action
- Holes and spaces need to be sealed where mice/rats may enter the house
- Provide pest control measures if renter-member actions have not worked and infestation persists (note this is an annual activity and the cost may be passed on).

Mould

It is the renter-members responsibility to ensure there is adequate ventilation in the property and that mould does not build up from poor ventilation or cleaning practices.

The renter-member is responsible for mould removal unless caused by a structural issue in which case the housing provider will be responsible to rectify the cause. Renter-members must notify NGRHC immediately of any structural defect that may cause mould – for example: leaking shower, overflowing gutters, exhaust fan not working etc.

NGRHC is responsible for structural issues that are contributing to the build-up of mould **ONLY**.

RELATED POLICIES

Asset Management
Complaints and Appeals policy
Environmental Policy
Business planning policy
House fixtures
Garden maintenance policy
Privacy and information sharing policy

LEGISLATION AND STANDARDS

Residential Tenancies Act 1997
Department of Health and Human Services Maintenance Standards
<https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/maintenance-manual>
Human Rights and Responsibilities Charter Act 2006

TRANSPARENCY AND ACCESSIBILITY

This policy is available on the NGRHC website www.ngrhc.org.au