

## **Tenancy Act Changes: Smoke alarms and insulation. What do I need to know?**

by Pam Marshall

Once again the Residential Tenancies Act is going to be strengthened with new requirements for insulation and smoke alarms. Whether you're a landlord or tenant it does mean change.

The new regulations are part of the Government's efforts to raise the standard of living and safety in sub-standard rental homes and social housing. To create warmer, drier, safer places to live, all rental properties are expected to meet the new criteria.



Effective from 1st July 2016, here is a summary of the changes...

### **Smoke Alarms:**

There must be a minimum of one working smoke alarm within 3 metres of each bedroom door, and in a self-contained caravan, sleep out or similar there must be a minimum of one working smoke alarm.

#### **Landlords**

- *You (and/or your Property Manager) are responsible for making sure smoke alarms are in working order at the beginning of every new tenancy.*
- *In multi-story units you must have one smoke alarm on each level within the household unit.*
- *Long life photoelectric smoke alarms are now required where there are no existing alarms. When existing smoke alarms are replaced, the replacements must be long life photoelectric smoke alarms. Hard wired smoke alarms are also acceptable.*
- *All smoke alarms must be replaced in accordance with the manufacturer's recommended replacement date stated on the alarm.*

#### **Tenants**

- *You are responsible for replacing batteries (if required) during your tenancy.*

### **Insulation:**

Most of the insulation requirements were announced last year in the Residential Tenancies Act changes, but as some of the deadlines for meeting insulation requirements are about to take effect, we felt it is worth a reminder.

- *From 1st July 2016, landlords must state on tenancy agreements the level of insulation in the property, so that potential tenants can make a more informed choice on where to live.*
- *By 1st July 2019, all rental properties must have ceiling and underfloor insulation.*

#### **Landlords**

- *By 1st July 2016 you need to make a statement in your tenancy agreement on the extent of the insulation installed in your property. To make this statement, you'll need to check and confirm what insulation is installed in your property.*
- *If the existing insulation does not meet the minimum thermal requirements (expressed in R-values) specified in the regulations, or is incomplete, damaged or damp, you will need to either*

replace the existing or install new insulation in the ceiling and underfloor to meet the current Building Code requirements. You do have until July 2019 to make these improvements to your property. [See a full list of the requirements here.](#)

#### **Tenants**

- *From July, any tenancy agreement will need to state whether the property has underfloor and ceiling insulation.*
- *If the insulation in your rental property doesn't meet the new requirements, your landlord will have to improve the state of insulation there by July 2019.*

If you're a landlord and want further advice on who to talk to about meeting insulation requirements, the EECA and the Insulation Association of New Zealand (IOANZ's) have [a list of recommended professional insulation companies and installers](#) who can provide assessments of the compliance of existing insulation installations.

**If you want to know more about the tenancy changes and what they will mean for your rental property, please get in touch with [our Property Management team](#).**