



# Rent Control News

## 2015 Consolidated Annual Report

Each year, the Rent Control Agency publishes a report on the status of rent-controlled housing, impact of market-rate rents, and activities related to the withdrawal of units from the rental market under the Ellis Act. The report also summarizes the activities of the Rent Control Board and Agency during 2015. The report is available on the Agency's website at [www.smgov.net/rentcontrol](http://www.smgov.net/rentcontrol). Here are a few interesting facts from the report:

**27,542**

Current number of controlled rental units (as of 12/31/15)

**2,019**

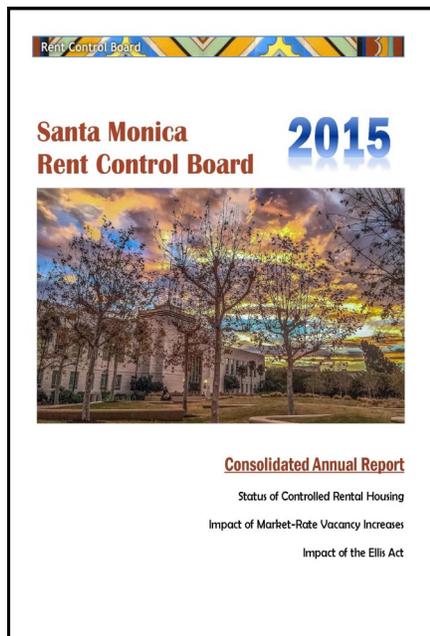
Net loss of units withdrawn under the Ellis Act (since 1986)

**89%**

Percentage of excess rent complaints from tenants paying market-rate rents

**10%**

Average median increase in newly established rents for tenancies started in 2015 as compared to tenancies started in 2014



**67%**

Percentage of controlled units occupied by tenants who moved in at market-rate rents after January 1, 1999

**45%**

Percentage of rent decrease petitions filed by tenants paying market-rate rents

## Rent Control's Remedy for Lack of Maintenance or Repairs

State and local laws require residential rental units be maintained properly and be fit to occupy. These laws, such as building and housing codes, were designed to protect the health and safety of tenants. Although tenants are responsible for taking care of their units, property owners are required to maintain their properties and repair conditions that affect a rental unit's habitability.

In addition to these laws, the Rent Control Law includes a remedy that encourages property owners to not only make necessary repairs but to continue the same level of housing services and amenities as were provided on the base rent date. ***This is true for tenants who moved in more recently and may be paying higher rents as well as for long-term tenants.***

Anytime a problem arises, a tenant should immediately notify the property owner (or manager). Most property owners want to maintain their properties in good condition since their property is a business investment. For those situations where the property owner fails to make necessary

*(Continued on page 2)*

## Tenants: You Live in a Rent-Controlled Unit

You are receiving this newsletter because your unit is in our records as being subject to the Rent Control Law. Tenants in rent-controlled units, including those who moved in during or after 1999 whose initial rents were set at market rates, have all the protections of the Rent Control Law. For all tenants in rent-controlled units, all increases of the maximum lawful rent are controlled by the Rent Control Law.

Printed on the back page of this newsletter is the Maximum Allowable Rent (MAR) for your unit according to our records. State law allows owners to establish a new rent for most new tenancies, and owners must register those rents with the Rent Control Board. If you are paying \$60 or more over the amount shown, the owner may not have registered with the Board the rent you agreed to pay when you moved in. If you have any questions regarding this or any other information, please call Rent Control at (310) 458-8751.

## General Adjustment 2016

In May, the Rent Control Board will be announcing the annual rent adjustment that can be implemented by property owners as of September 1, 2016. The General Adjustment (GA) is based on 75% of the annual change in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for the Los Angeles area. The Board may choose to hold a public hearing (at its June meeting) to consider implementing a maximum rent increase. In late June, the Rent Control Agency will send a mailing to all tenants and property owners explaining the 2016 GA and what surcharges owners are allowed to pass through to tenants.

Property owners will also be sent a report listing the Maximum Allowable Rent (MAR) in the Board's records for the rental units on the owners' properties. The report lists the MAR before adding the 2016 GA, as well as what the MAR will be after the GA is added. Information in the MAR Report is based on information owners have registered with the Board. For this reason (and to avoid possible complaints of non-registration and collection of excess rent), it is important that owners register all new tenancies with the Board within 30 days of rental.

## Rent Control's Remedy for Lack of Maintenance or Repairs

*(continued from page 1)*

repairs, there is a remedy available in the Rent Control Law: the Decrease Petition.

Before filing a petition for a rent reduction, tenants must contact the owner in writing stating what repairs are necessary and/or what housing services or amenities have been reduced. Tenants should keep a copy of their written notice to the owner. A Rent Decrease Petition may be filed with the Rent Control Agency if 30 days pass and any problem mentioned in the written notice has not been corrected.

When a petition is filed, an Agency staff member trained to assist in dispute resolutions contacts the tenant and owner and attempts to resolve the issues raised in the petition through a mediation process. More than half of the decrease petitions filed are resolved informally in mediation. Issues that are not resolved are scheduled for a hearing.

For issues that go to a hearing, the parties will each have a chance to present their evidence, and a hearing officer will decide whether a rent decrease will be granted. If a rent decrease is granted, it will remain in effect until the problem for which the decrease was granted has been corrected.

Rent decreases are prospective only. Rent decreases are not awarded for previous months during which a problem existed. Therefore, tenants should contact the owner in writing as soon as a problem arises. Also, decreases are only granted for conditions that still exist at the time a petition is filed. If a tenant makes repairs at their own expense, a decrease cannot be granted — and the Rent Control Board does not have the authority to require the property owner to reimburse tenants who have made their own repairs. In these situations, tenants may consider filing a lawsuit in small claims court to recover their costs.

## Rent Control Board Welcomes Anastasia Foster



In December 2015, Commissioner Ilse Rosenstein retired from the Board after four years of dedicated service. Announcing the vacancy in January, the Rent Control Board sought applications from people interested in being appointed to the seat. At their February meeting, the Board appointed Anastasia Foster to the position.

Ms. Foster has lived in Santa Monica for 10 years and has been an active member of the community. Her volunteer work has included fund-raising for the Westside Food Bank, helping out at Meals on Wheels, doing voice recordings for the blind, and answering hotline calls concerning tenant issues. She looks forward to overseeing the fair administration of the Rent Control Law in her role as Rent Control Board Commissioner.

## 2016 Rent Control Seminars

Want to learn more about rent control? Join us for one of the informational seminars the Rent Control Agency presents throughout the year. Seminars for the remainder of 2016 are tentatively scheduled as indicated below. Check for calendar updates on our website at [www.smgov.net/rentcontrol](http://www.smgov.net/rentcontrol) or on our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/santamonicarentcontrol](http://www.facebook.com/santamonicarentcontrol).

**All seminars (except the Landlord/Tenant Forum) are held at:**

Santa Monica Main Public Library  
601 Santa Monica Blvd., Multipurpose Room, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor

**Please register for any seminar by calling**  
(310) 458-8751 or emailing [rentcontrol@smgov.net](mailto:rentcontrol@smgov.net).

### Calculating the Annual Rent Increase

Designed for owners and property managers, this workshop offers an overview of how to prepare the notice regarding the 2016 general adjustment and surcharges. Attendees can sign up for one-on-one assistance for help calculating and completing rent increase notices for one property.

**July 5<sup>th</sup>, Tuesday, 6:30pm – 9 pm**

### Rental Property Maintenance

Presented with the City's Code Enforcement Division, this seminar addresses the types of maintenance and repair required, how and where complaints can be filed, temporary relocation benefits for tenants during certain repairs, as well as issues related to habitability. Tenants, owners, managers and other interested parties are welcome.

**October 11<sup>th</sup>, Tuesday, 9:30 am – noon**

### Landlord/Tenant Forum

This seminar is tentatively scheduled to be held at the Thelma Terry Center at Virginia Avenue Park. The City Attorney's Consumer Protection Division and the Rent Control Agency present updates on landlord/tenant rights and responsibilities. The forum is part of the City's ongoing effort to increase public awareness of how local and state laws impact tenants and landlords.

**December 6<sup>th</sup>, Tuesday, 9:00 am – noon**

**NOTE: Later this year, the Power Point presentations that were used in the Owning Rental Property in Santa Monica seminar this March and the Tenants' Introduction to Rent Control in May will be available for viewing on the Rent Control website.**



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### Rent Control Board

1685 Main Street, Room 202  
Santa Monica, CA 90401



Rent Control is closed every other Friday.  
Please call before coming to be sure it's a Friday we're open.

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**Public Counter:** 1685 Main St., Room 202  
M-Th / Alternate F: 8:00-4:30



**Telephone:** (310) 458-8751  
M-Th: 7:30-5:30 / Alt F: 8:00-5:00



**Website:** [www.smgov.net/rentcontrol](http://www.smgov.net/rentcontrol)



**Email:** [rentcontrol@smgov.net](mailto:rentcontrol@smgov.net)



**www.facebook.com/santamonicarentcontrol**

#### TENANTS

The amount shown in the circle at left is the Maximum Allowable Rent (MAR) for your unit, per Rent Control records. The legal rent for your unit is the MAR plus allowable surcharges, which typically add \$7.29 to \$60 (more for condos) to your rent. If you moved in recently, Rent Control records may still list the MAR for the previous tenancy. If the message is "Tenant Call," or if you have questions about your MAR, allowable surcharges, or any Rent Control topic, please call an Information Analyst at (310) 458-8751.

#### OWNERS

Each July, owners receive a report listing the MAR that is listed in Rent Control's records for every rental unit on their properties. If you are an owner, the circle at left should not include a MAR. If a MAR is listed, please call an Information Analyst at (310) 458-8751.

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## Inside the Spring 2016 issue

- ◆ *The 2015 Consolidated Annual Report*
- ◆ *Rent Control's remedy for lack of repairs*
- ◆ *General Adjustment 2016 ...and more*

**Para obtener una traducción de este boletín en español, vea el aviso con las instrucciones correspondientes en el interior de este boletín.**