

Management Directive No.:	MB50
Management Directive Name:	Excessive Clutter
Date Approved by CEO or Designated Person:	April 3, 2013
Date revision approved by CEO or Designated Person:	December 5, 2018
Related SOP, Management Directive, Board Policy, Forms	MB50- Excessive Clutter Follow Up Unit Inspection Tool

Policy Statement

Kawartha Lakes Haliburton Housing Corporation (KLH Housing Corp.) strives to provide tenants with safe and affordable accommodations to suit their needs. Pursuant to Section 20 of the *Residential Tenancies Act, 2006* (RTA), a Landlord is responsible for maintaining the rented premises in a good state of repair and fit for habitation during the tenancy and must comply with health, safety and housing standards. Pursuant to Section 33 and 34 of the RTA, a tenant is responsible for the ordinary cleanliness of the rented unit and repair and undue damage to the rental unit of the residential complex caused by his or her willful or negligent conduct.

Hoarding means more than having an excessive amount of items. It's a specific behavior that severely affects a person's life. KLH Housing Corp. will use the term "excessive clutter" when referring to the excessive accumulation of items in a unit. Our role as a landlord is to focus on the health and safety of the unit rather than assess individual tenants.

KLH Housing Corp. could be found negligent if it failed to take corrective action against a tenant who has excessive clutter and where such failure results in personal injury or property damage. Excessive clutter prevents KLH Housing Corp. from:

- maintaining a unit in a good state of repair,
- could cause fires,
- complicate the putting out of fires,
- create unclean conditions,
- result in foul odors, cause and/or exacerbate pest infestations,
- create health and safety hazards, such as trip hazards, and
- make it impossible to inspect and/or repair a unit.

Scope:

KLH Housing Corp. will comply with all regulatory requirements and take all appropriate and necessary action:

- To ensure the safety of all tenants in the building
- To protect and preserve the security of KLH Housing Corp. property
- To make every reasonable effort to maintain the tenancy of those dealing with excessive clutter.

Procedures are hereby established to assist staff in the identification of excessive clutter and hoarding behavior and to outline KLH Housing Corp. 's intervention in addressing the excessive clutter and hoarding while attempting to maintain the tenancy.

Definitions:

Excessive clutter

Is the acquisition of and failure to discard a large number of possessions that appear to be useless or of limited value. The living spaces are sufficiently cluttered so as to preclude activities for which those spaces were designed.

Procedure:

Units with potential or real excessive clutter will follow a four stage process:

1. Identification,
2. Notification,
3. Planning, and
4. Follow-Up/Resolution.

1. Identification:

Standard Criteria to Assess Health and Safety of Units

The tenant will be made aware of KLH Housing Corp. 's Excessive Clutter Policy at Lease signing and that if attendance is required by KLH Housing Corp. staff to identify excessive clutter, pictures will be taken.

Tenants and staff working on behalf of KLH Housing Corp. will receive educational material regarding the identification of Excessive Clutter and Hoarding Behaviour which will include the provision of the Clutter Image Rating Scale.

To assist staff in the recognition of possible hoarders and thereby be able to seek referrals to appropriate agencies for their mental illness of hoarding, the following characteristics are provided:

Characteristics of Hoarding Behaviour

1. Belief that emotional comfort comes from objects
2. Fear of losing something important
3. Feelings of loss of self or identity
4. Need for control, no one can touch their belongings
5. Discarding is labourious, so it is avoided
6. Distress and avoidance: distress at *not* acquiring and distress at discarding
7. Grief-like feelings when discarding due to intense initial attachment
8. Hyper responsible for objects: discarding requires others to need and appreciate items as much
9. Three common saving patterns:
 - a. Items **MUST** be saved because they may be useful
 - b. Items evoke happy past memories – as long as the items are kept, the person or experience isn't lost
 - c. Everything I have is special and unique so don't know how to organize or group it (aesthetic saving)

KLH Housing Corp. staff may become aware of possible excessive clutter in a unit by various means:

- during maintenance or contractor attendance,
- annual or scheduled unit inspections by staff,
- contact made to KLH Housing Corp. by family, friends , neighbours or agency staff.

Staff working on behalf of KLH Housing Corp. will inform their supervisor if any of the following are seen in the unit when they attend:

- Egress in and out of the unit is less than 3 feet wide
- Entrances and exits from each room is less than 3 feet wide
- Smoke alarms are not operational
- Electrical cords are overloaded or covered with clutter
- Accumulation piles of items is greater than waist high

- Items are on top of the stove
- Flammable items are stored on the counter area beside the stove
- Items are stored within four feet of furnaces, water heaters or baseboard heaters

Maintenance staff attending a unit without operational smoke detectors will immediately ensure that the smoke detectors are made operational.

2. Notification:

Clear and Effective Communication with Tenants, Staff and Stakeholders

Supervisors will ensure that the Program Supervisor-KLH (PS-KLH) is immediately made aware of the potential excessive clutter and if smoke detectors have been tampered with by the tenant

The Program Supervisor-KLH will ensure that the tenant is served with a 24 hour Notice of Entry which will also note that KLH Housing Corp. intends to take pictures.

All visits to the unit will be documented.

Within two business days the Program Supervisor-KLH or delegate will attend the unit for identification and classification of the clutter using the Clutter Rating Scale. Pictures will be taken and printed with the date digitally stamped on them.

If, after an initial review of the unit

- the PS-KLH believes that the tenant may potentially have a hoarding problem, the PS-KLH will contact the Community's Hoarding Team for further review and assessment.
- the PS-KLH believes that there is an immediate and high risk of harm (abuse), neglect, danger to health/safety, the PS-KLH will immediately contact the appropriate Emergency Contact (Fire Dept, CAS, Health Unit etc)
 - The PS-KLH may issue and N5 and/or N7
- the PS-KLH rates the excessive clutter at four (4) or below using the Clutter Image Rating Scale, a meeting will be held with the Community Support Worker (CSW) and appropriate action plans determined.

If the situation is not an immediate crisis, the PS-KLH will send a letter to the tenant stating any concerns and requesting a meeting date.

- If the tenant responds, a second letter will be sent confirming the date of the meeting with the tenant in the unit, common room or office.
- If there is no response after 10 days, the PS-KLH or CSW will contact the tenant by phone.
 - If there is no response, a visit will be made to the unit by the PS-KLH or CSW.
 - If there is no response or the tenant refuses contact, then the PS-KLH will consider contacting Public Health and/or Fire and/or Municipal Licensing & Standards. The Community Hoarding Team Lead will also be contacted.

3. Planning:

Work With Tenant to Develop a Plan

The PS-KLH and/or CSW will meet the tenant to:

- Discuss the condition of the unit
- Set out the minimum expectations of what needs to be cleared or cleaned
- Agree on a plan together
- Use the 'Follow Up Meeting Kit' as a guide to discuss KLH Housing Corp.'s concerns and to develop a plan for the Tenant.
 - The Follow Up Meeting Kit includes:
 - Clutter Image Rating Scale
 - Follow Up Inspection Tool
 - 2 Copies of Consent to Disclose form
 - Fact Sheet for the tenant

The Tenant will be provided with information on relevant resources and an offer will be made to connect the tenant with supports including the Community Hoarding Team.

The Tenant will be asked to sign the Consent to Disclose form.

The PS-KLH and/or CSW will take pictures if possible.

A follow up inspection schedule will be made. This will include the next inspection date with consideration made for shorter timelines for more serious cases.

After the meeting the PS-KLH and/or CSW will send a letter within one week confirming the details of the meeting and plan.

If the Tenant refuses to meet or allow access to the PS-KLH and/or CSW for the planning meeting, consideration will be made in bringing in Public Health and/or Fire and/or Municipal Standards.

- A letter will be sent by the PS-KLH and/or CSW highlighting to the Tenant KLH Housing Corp.'s concerns and consequences of not meeting.
- Another offer to meet and another offer to connect with supports will be made.

4. Follow-Up / Resolution:

Follow-Up Visits to Ensure Progress or Eviction Notices

There will be at least three follow-up inspection meetings.

The timing between follow-up inspection meetings may vary from one week to one month.

At each meeting:

- The 'Follow-Up Inspection' form will be used to review the state of unit compared to plan.
- The next steps will be outlined with possible consequences made known to the tenant.
- Photos will be taken if possible.

After each meeting, a letter will be sent within one week confirming the details of the meeting.

Once the plan is fully implemented and significant progress has been made, the PS-KLH and/or CSW will discuss a Long Term Plan to maintain the unit.

- Regular inspections will be set for every 2 to 3 months, depending on the unit.

If there has been no demonstrable improvement in the documented steps to be taken to address the unit concerns, the PS-KLH will issue an N5 and/or N7.

If the tenant makes progress after the N5 is received, the PS-KLH and/or CSW will continue to meet with the tenant to develop a plan and complete inspection reports. Otherwise the PS-KLH will file an Application with the Landlord Tenant Board.

Revision History:**Proposed Date of Review:** December 2020

Revision	Date	Description of changes	Requested By
v1	April 2013	Initial Release	
v2	Dec 2018	New template format	CEO