

# California West Newsletter

February 2012

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*California West attempts to catch maintenance problems before they become too big through preventative maintenance.*

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## Preventative maintenance protects property owners from expensive repairs

*“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” – Benjamin Franklin*

One of the best ways to save money over time is with preventative maintenance. Some of the routine tasks that California West recommends and performs for its clients are as follows:

- ✓ Blow debris off roofs;
- ✓ Clear gutters;
- ✓ Hire a plumber to snake drains that regularly clog;
- ✓ Test smoke detectors whenever visiting a property;
- ✓ Keep lists of certain units that have quirky needs (like recaulking a shower every 6 months, etc.);
- ✓ Check sump pumps to make sure they are working before the rains hit; and
- ✓ Check units for mold if there are known mold issues.

Also, another way that California West catches problems before they become too big is through interior inspections. Sometimes tenants fail to report problems and an interior inspection will reveal an issue that needs to be addressed.

The bottom line is that being proactive ultimately saves money.

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## Property owners may prohibit smoking

According to a new law that became effective on January 1, 2012, residential property owners are now expressly allowed by law to prohibit the smoking of cigarettes or other tobacco products by anyone on any portion of a property, including the exteriors.

Aside from the obvious health issues, California West believes that it is wise to prohibit smoking on the inside of units. Nicotine damages walls and carpets and is very expensive to remove.

That said, it is not always wise to prohibit smoking on patios or other exterior areas because such policies are difficult to enforce and may simply force bad tenants to smoke inside where they are less likely to be caught, but where the resulting property damage is more expensive to repair.

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*California West is saving its clients the expense of a separate maintenance call by installing carbon monoxide detectors while performing other routine maintenance work.*

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## **Carbon monoxide detectors**

Carbon monoxide detectors must be installed in all housing units that have a fossil fuel burning heater or appliance, fireplace, or an attached garage. The deadline for installing these detectors was on or before July 1, 2011 for all single-family dwellings and is on or before January 1, 2013 for all other dwellings.

California West met the July 1, 2011 deadline for single family dwellings and has been instructing its maintenance staff to install these detectors during routine maintenance calls at all other properties as soon as possible.

By installing these detectors during routine maintenance calls, California West is saving its clients the expense of a separate trip for which there is a minimum \$40 charge.

California West is also maintaining a list of units with carbon monoxide detectors to ensure compliance with the January 1, 2013 deadline.

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## **Management agreements need to reflect all instructions given by property owners**

California West's clients occasionally provide instructions to disburse money to, or setup a savings account in the name of, a person who is different from the person or entity with which California West has a management agreement.

A common example of this occurs when a family trust owns a property. In that situation, the California West management agreement often is with the trustee of the family trust. The trustee may then want to instruct California West to disburse owner withdrawals directly to an individual family member who is a beneficiary of the trust, or the trustee may instruct California West to hold reserves in a savings account that is in the name of an individual family member.

In those cases, however, the management agreement often needs to be changed to reflect in writing the fact that California West is being instructed to pay money to a person other than the person or entity with whom there is a management relationship.

California West can only act according to what a management agreement authorizes and must therefore make sure that all agreements accurately reflect the desires of its clients.

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