

# Monthly Newsletter

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## Water conservation will become necessary if drought continues.

All of California is in a severe drought – or worse. That is according to the U.S. Drought Monitor, a federal website that tracks drought conditions.

San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties are currently in an exceptional drought, which is the highest level of drought.

In the early 1990's there was a similar condition which resulted in surcharges and restrictions on watering. Currently, the only local city with water restrictions is Arroyo Grande, where residents can only water their lawns on certain days of the week.

Other cities, such as Grover Beach, are asking residents to conserve water but there is not yet any mandatory program in place.



Some cities have water conservation programs in place. For example, Grover Beach and Los Osos both have programs to replace regular toilets with low flow versions.

Going forward, if the drought continues, we might begin to see more aggressive action by local cities to force residents and property owners to conserve water.

At least that is what happened in previous drought conditions. For property owners, this may mean higher water bills and possible restrictions on landscaping practices.

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## Grover Beach: a top small city

Grover Beach was recently ranked among the top 15 small cities in California.

Listed at number 13, Grover Beach “makes valiant efforts to keep housing affordable and their community diverse,” according to Cities Journal, and “offers a convenient middle ground if you love the beach lifestyle but also want to be in close proximity to mountains and colder weather.”

The top ranked small city was Healdsburg in Sonoma County.

*Knowing what is reasonable to deduct from a security deposit comes down to experience and common sense.*

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## Dealing with security deposit disputes

California West deals with hundreds of security deposit returns every year and there are times when we have disagreements with tenants. Similarly, there are times when we have to explain to property owners that they cannot charge tenants for every penny of repairs when a unit turns over.

Recently, this balance between tenants and property owners was at issue when a tenant took California West to small claims court.

The tenant had lived in a house for many years and the house needed painting. Some of the bedrooms, though, had been painted a very dark color by the tenant, and therefore needed a primer coat before painting. We charged the tenant for the primer coat and the owner for everything else. The tenant disputed this allocation because he had lived in the house for so long and had heard somewhere that landlords cannot charge for paint after some amount of years.

California West, however, prevailed in small claims court.

Although this tenant took us to court, we are almost always able to resolve our disputes with tenants over the telephone. Tenants have to understand that we do not own the properties we manage and we do not benefit from deducting excessive amounts of money from security deposits. That said, we must strike a reasonable balance. If we fail to deduct for a reasonable charge then we will have rightfully upset property owners.

Our job as a property manager is to charge where appropriate but no more than a reasonable amount. Knowing what is reasonable comes down to experience and common sense.

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