

# Tenant Harassment

**If you believe that the owner of your building is withholding essential services or not making repairs to force you to move out of your apartment, contact HPD's Anti-Harassment Unit (AHU) by calling 311.**

It is illegal for building owners to force tenants to leave their apartments or surrender their rights. If you are a tenant in a rental unit in the City who is being harassed by your property owner, you can get information and help. If you are a low-income tenant and/or a senior, you may be eligible for free legal assistance.

Harassment is any act or omission by or on behalf of an owner that causes or is intended to cause a tenant to surrender or waive any rights in relation to the occupancy of their unit.

## Examples of Tenant Harassment

- Not offering leases or lease renewals, or repeatedly trying to pay you to move out of your home or to give up your rights (a buyout) if you are a rent-regulated tenant.
- Offering you a buyout:
  - While threatening you, intimidating you or using obscene language.
  - By contacting you at your place of employment without obtaining your written permission.
  - While providing false information in connection with the buyout offer.
- Contacting you about a buyout unless they provide you with the following information in writing:
  - The purpose of the contact and that the contact is on behalf of the owner.
  - That you can reject the offer and continue to live in your home.
  - That you have a right to seek advice from a lawyer and may seek information on the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) website about legal services.
  - That, if you advise the owner in writing that you do not want to be contacted about any buyout offer, the owner cannot contact you about it for 180 days unless you advise the owner in writing at some earlier time that you are interested in discussing a buyout, or unless the Court permits the owner to discuss a buyout offer with you.
  - The median asking rent for a dwelling unit in the same community district, within the previous twelve-month period.
- Unjustified eviction notices or illegal lockouts.
- Threats and intimidation, such as late-night phone calls including phone calls to encourage or ask you to move out of your home or give up your rights.

- Overcharging for a rent-regulated apartment.
- Failure to provide necessary repairs or utilities.
- Deliberately causing construction-related problems for tenants, such as working after hours, blocking entrances, conducting work without a permit, or failing to remove excessive dust or debris.
- Repeated interruptions of essential services, such as heat, water, or electricity.
- Providing you with misleading information regarding the unit occupancy status or violations; making a false statement or misrepresentation as to a material fact regarding the current occupancy or the rent stabilization status of a building or dwelling unit on any application or construction documents for a permit for work.
- Repeatedly contacting or visiting any person lawfully entitled to occupancy or such unit during non-business hours when the tenant has not indicated a willingness to have such contact or visit.
- Commencing a baseless or frivolous court proceeding against a person lawfully entitled to occupancy of such dwelling unit if there is a pattern of such proceedings in a building.

See the tabs below for more information about seeking legal assistance, how HPD can help, and additional resources.

## Seek Legal Assistance

Tenants can initiate an action in Housing Court based on a claim of harassment.

Free legal assistance is available to low-income tenants who are being harassed by property owners. Residents can call the following legal service providers for more information:

- Legal Aid Society: 212-577-3300
- Legal Services NYC: 917-661-4500
- Urban Justice Center: 646-459-3017

If you are a resident in one of the following zip codes, call the New York City Tenant Protection Hotline at 917-661-4505, Monday – Friday, 10:00am – 4:00pm:

**Bronx:** 10452, 10453, 10457, 10459, 10460

**Brooklyn:** 11206, 11207, 11208, 11212, 11215, 11217, 11231, 11233, 11237

**Manhattan:** 10029, 10034, 10035

**Queens:** 11101, 11354, 11358, 11691, 11692

**Staten Island:** 10301, 10304

Please note that the abovementioned have been identified as areas with an increase in reports of harassment.

Learn more about [Legal Assistance](#).

## How HPD Can Help

A property owner's failure to correct dangerous conditions and/or frequent disruptions of or failure to supply water, heat, gas, or electric service may constitute harassment. HPD can investigate claims of harassment due to maintenance issues. If you believe that the owner of your building is withholding essential services or not making repairs to force you to move out of your apartment, contact HPD's Anti-Harassment Unit (AHU) by calling 311.

HPD also performs joint inspections of buildings with multiple City and State agencies through the [Tenant Harassment Prevention Task Force \(THPT\)](#).

## Additional Resources

- [Housing Court and Eviction Prevention](#)
- [Report of Harassment Findings](#) *Note: Please disable your pop-up blocker in order to view the report.*

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Download the [print version](#) of the FAQ.

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Click a topic, or press the enter key on a topic, to reveal its answer.

I reported maintenance conditions to my property owner and received no response. The property owner is not making repairs, and I believe they want me to move out. Is this harassment?

Yes, under the NYC Housing Maintenance Code, a property owner's failure to correct dangerous conditions and/or frequent disruptions of water supply, heat, gas or electric service may be harassment. File all complaints with 311 and make sure to say that you believe you are being harassed. You can use violations issued to support a Housing Court case against your property owner.

You may also make a harassment claim in Housing Court. [Housing Court Answers \(HCA\)](#) provides information about Housing Court procedures, property owner-tenant issues, enforcement of housing code, and referrals for free legal help and community organizations for advice and possible representation. HCA is present in each borough's Housing Court. Call their hotline at 212-962-4795, Tuesday-Thursday, 9am-5pm.

There's construction in my building, and I don't feel safe. What should I do?

When there is construction in a building, property owners are required to post a Tenant Protection Plan and the Safe Construction Bill of Rights in a common area of the building until construction is completed or distribute both to tenants. If you did not receive the documents and do not see them posted, call 311. Read the [Safe Construction Bill of Rights](#). If there is excessive dust and debris, unsafe work practices, working after hours, or blocking entrances, file a

complaint with 311 and/or contact the Department of Building's Office of the Tenant Advocate at 212-393-2949 or [TenantAdvocate@buildings.nyc.gov](mailto:TenantAdvocate@buildings.nyc.gov). For more information on illegal or unsafe construction, please visit [nyc.gov/dob](http://nyc.gov/dob).

I feel that the owner, super, or other owner representative is trying to get me to leave. What can I do?

Some behaviors by these individuals are defined as harassment. For example:

- Late-night calls intended to pressure tenants to move out
- Repeatedly contacting or visiting a tenant during non-business hours when the tenant has not asked to be contacted
- Threats or discrimination against a tenant because of their immigration status

Tenants can report threats and discrimination by contacting 311 or the NYC Commission on Human Rights at 718-722-3131.

If tenants are threatened based on their immigration status, they can contact the NYS Immigration Hotline at 800-566-7636.

You may also qualify for free legal services. See the section above under the Seek Legal Assistance heading.

My property owner is threatening to evict me. Is this harassment?

Yes, this could be harassment if there is no basis (such as failure to pay rent) for the eviction. Illegal eviction or attempts to illegally evict, including removing the door or lock to an occupied unit or changing the lock on the door without supplying a key is also harassment.

If your property owner has locked you out of your apartment, you can contact the NYPD or report the property owner to your local precinct.

If you already received an eviction notice, you can visit [evictionfreenyc.org](http://evictionfreenyc.org) for guidance on how to respond and access legal services.

If you are facing eviction because you are having trouble paying rent, call 311 for a referral to HomeBase, which connects tenants to eviction-related services and rent assistance.

My property owner has repeatedly offered me money to leave my apartment. What should I do?

HPD recommends that you do not sign any documents/agreements without seeking legal assistance. Tenants can reject buyout offers and continue to live in their home. You can also advise your property owner in writing that you do not want to be contacted regarding any buyout offer. The property owner is required to not contact you for 180 days unless you write at an earlier time that you are interested in discussing a buyout or unless the court permits the property owner to discuss a buyout offer with you.

My property owner doesn't want to renew my lease. Who can I contact?

If you are paying rent and there are no other related issues, you can obtain assistance from legal service providers by dialing 311. If you're behind on rent and facing eviction, call 311 to locate your nearest HomeBase.

If you have a rent-controlled or rent-stabilized lease, and your property owner is refusing to renew or is charging more than the legal rent, you can contact NYS Homes and Community Renewal (NYSHCR) at 866-275-3427, or file a harassment claim by visiting [hcr.ny.gov](http://hcr.ny.gov).

If you're not sure if your home is rent-stabilized, call NYSHCR at 718-739-6400.

How can I find out if any of my current or former neighbors reported harassment?

HPD posts on its website the addresses of buildings where a finding of harassment has been made by a court, when the agency receives the information. You can find it at [HPD Online](#).

I'm experiencing more than one issue. Who should I contact?

In addition to specific issues as previously described, you can take the following steps:

- You can contact the information and complaint line at the New York State Attorney General's Office at 800-771-7755.
- If you live in a building with rent-stabilized units, you can email the Tenant Harassment Protection Task Force (THPT) at [THPT@hpd.nyc.gov](mailto:THPT@hpd.nyc.gov) or call NYSHCR at 866-275-3427 or 718-739-6400. THPT is a collaboration of City agencies created to investigate and bring actions against property owners who harass tenants. THPT primarily handles matters that impact a large number of rent regulated tenants where actions by a property owner may rise to criminality.

How can I receive legal assistance if I'm not able to afford it?

Free legal assistance is available to low-income tenants who are being harassed. You can call the following legal service providers for information:

- Legal Aid Society: 212-577-3300
- Legal Services NYC: 917-661-4500
- Urban Justice Center: 646-459-3036

If you are a resident in one of the following zip codes, which have seen an increase in reports of harassment, you can call the New York City Tenant Protection Hotline (NYC TPH) at 917-661-4505, Monday–Friday, 10am–4pm. NYC TPH provides legal assistance to low-income tenants being harassed by property owners trying to take advantage of zoning changes.

- Bronx: 10452, 10453, 10457, 10459, 10460

- Brooklyn: 11206, 11207, 11208, 11212, 11215, 11217, 11231, 11233, 11237
- Manhattan: 10029, 10034, 10035
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