

Maintenance and Repairs Policy

Policy Description

This policy details SouthEast Housing Co-operative's policies relating to property maintenance and repairs, as detailed below in extracts from the current version of the Member Manual.

Scope

All rental properties owned or managed by SouthEast Housing Co-operative.

Definitions

DFFH	Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
DoH	Director of Housing
SEHC	SouthEast Housing Co-operative Ltd

Relevant policy statements and/or principles

SEHC is responsible for repairs and asset management under its contract with DFFH.

- Members are responsible for maintaining their house in a clean and tidy condition as defined in the Residential Tenancies Act 1997.
- Maintenance and asset works will be performed meeting Residential Tenancies Act and DFFH requirements as a minimum.
- SEHC will provide a good standard of asset management to its members.
- To avoid liability under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, SEHC will not employ any contractor who does not have their own public liability/personal accident insurance and WorkCover for their employees.

Procedures

Emergency Maintenance

Emergency Maintenance is defined as corrective works that should be undertaken immediately for reasons of health, safety and security. The following items are considered emergency repairs:

- Serious fire, storm damage, flooding or major roof leak.
- A failure of or breakdown to the supply of gas, electricity and water, including a sewerage blockage.
- A breakdown of any appliance used for hot water, cooking and heating.
- Any damage that makes the premises unsafe or unsecure.

In the event of an emergency repair becoming necessary, the following process should be followed:

- During office hours, members should contact the SEHC office or the Asset Coordinator immediately.

- After hours, members should phone the Emergency Maintenance mobile number immediately.

If the member is unable to contact any of the above within one hour, and the problem is one of those listed above, then the member may arrange the repairs to be carried out by a tradesperson listed on the “Emergency Contact List” and contact SouthEast Housing Co-operative as soon as possible.

Members are asked to not call out tradespeople for emergency maintenance if the matter can reasonably wait until the next working day for SouthEast Housing Co-operative to organise. For example, if a toilet is difficult to flush and the property has two toilets and there are no health concerns, or on a mild Sunday evening if a heater malfunctions.

Members should be aware that:

According to the Residential Tenancies Act, if a renter has taken all reasonable steps to contact the office but has been unsuccessful, he or she may arrange for the emergency repairs up to a limit of \$2,500. However, if a renter organises repair work for something which is not considered an emergency, the renter will be held liable to pay for the repair him or herself. Likewise, if the emergency repair is over the value of \$2,500 the renter may be liable for the amount over \$2,500.

Notwithstanding any of the above, the member who is the authorising individual must inform the SEHC office of all out of hour’s emergency works they have authorised and provide any supporting documentation within 3 working days or the repair bill may not be honoured.

Cyclical Maintenance

Cyclical Maintenance is defined as preventative works such as painting, and replacement of worn items such as carpets, fencing, guttering, heating and cooking appliances etc. Cyclical maintenance is assessed and done on an as-needs basis.

If a member requests cyclical works, the SEHC will assess the claim and put it on the cyclical works list to be completed at a later date. Alternatively, the renter will be advised that works are not necessary at this point in time.

Cyclical Works are prioritised and are responded to on an as-needs basis. Works are undertaken when sufficient funds are available. Where possible, renters of houses undergoing cyclical maintenance will be consulted on choice of colours within certain limits. Ceilings will be white; walls are to be lighter pastel colours. Carpets are to be durable and a colour that does not highlight stains.

General Maintenance

General Maintenance is defined as all maintenance that is not defined as either Emergency or Cyclical and is the result of fair wear and tear.

Members requiring repairs to their house should discuss the matter with the Asset Co-ordinator. Alternatively, repairs and other works maybe identified during property inspections.

If the works are required, the work order will be dispatched to the relevant contractor.

Renters must ensure that no damage occurs beyond fair wear and tear. If a renter does not ensure that care was taken to avoid damaging the property as defined by the Residential Tenancies Act, the renter may be found liable for any repair costs.

Renter Responsibilities

House & Yard & Guttering

The Tenancy Agreement outlines the renter's responsibility for the upkeep of lawns and gardens, disposal of rubbish and garden refuse. On an annual basis the gutters will be cleaned at the expense of SEHC.

Renter Feed Back

Renters are invited to comment to SEHC about the quality of maintenance work performed on the Maintenance Satisfaction Form.

Pets

Renters have sole responsibility for the welfare and security of their pets. SEHC is not responsible for any maintenance needs caused by a pet e.g. pet doors and scratches on doors. Renters who allow pets or whose pets are required to be inside the house are responsible for steam cleaning carpets annually, which may include replacing underlay and sterilizing and sealing floorboards.

Carpet Cleaning

Steam cleaning of carpets is a renter responsibility and it is recommended that it is undertaken at least every 3 years.

Swimming Pools/Spas

New laws to improve swimming pool and spa safety came into effect in Victoria on 1 December 2019. From this date it became mandatory for owners of land where a swimming pool or spa is located to register said pools or spas with the relevant council and have a compliant safety barrier in place to restrict access by young children. This includes permanent pools, above ground pools, indoor pools, hot tubs, bathing or wading pools, and relocatable pools. Owners are also required to obtain and lodge compliance certificates for their safety barriers, and these must be renewed every 3 years.

As the Director of Housing (DoH) is the owner of the vast majority of SEHC's properties, neither SEHC nor the renter can apply for registration of a pool or spa on behalf of the DoH where the DoH is the owner. Where SEHC is the owner of the property, permission will not be granted to install any pool or spa requiring registration with the local council or the installation of a compliant safety barrier to restrict access by young children.

SouthEast takes this approach to ensure the safety of members and renters, neighbours and community members.

Additions or Fixtures

A "permanent fixture" is any fixed addition to a house which alters its structure. Renters can only install fixtures, renovate, make structural changes or additions to their house if they obtain written permission from SouthEast Housing Co-operative prior to undertaking any works.

Unless the written consent states otherwise, the renter must return or pay to have the property returned to its original condition upon vacating, except where SouthEast Housing Co-operative accepts that the property will benefit from retaining any changes.

Any renter who arranges works without SouthEast Housing Co-operative's authorisation will be liable for costs involved in reinstating the property to its original condition in accordance with the Tenancy agreement.

Broken Windows

Renters making claims on broken windows must file a police incident report that states the renter or other residents or their guests or associates in the property were not responsible and provide a copy to SouthEast Housing Co-operative.

Standard Items

Apart from what is required under the *Residential Tenancies Act*, SouthEast Housing Co-operative will provide:

Chain operated Holland blinds to all windows (unless opaque glass)
Dual flush toilet system
Exhaust fans in bathroom and any kitchen, toilet or laundry without a window.
External front and back door lights
External sun blinds on westerly windows for older people's dwellings (over 60 years of age).
Floor covering – carpet and vinyl
Fly screens to all opening windows
Four bedroom houses with two separate living areas are entitled to a second heater.
Hot water service
Insulation in ceiling
Letterbox
Locks, clasps or winders to all windows.
One designated air conditioner for one room in each property
One garden shed with a concrete floor if there is no garage.
Opening windows in all bedrooms
Pelmets in living areas with space heaters
Secure side and rear fences
Security doors to all external doors
Shower and bath
Stove
Television aerials will be installed and repaired.

Floorboards

Renters can request to have carpets removed and have floors sanded and coated in 3 coats of polyurethane or similar product, instead of a carpet or vinyl replacement, where they are able to supply relevant supporting medical information.

Applications will be considered on an individual basis.

Window Covering

No drapes or curtains will be provided from SouthEast Housing Co-operative funds.

Servicing of Heating

Heaters/air conditioners to be serviced on a programmatic basis:

- Ducted Heating Units, Wall or Console Space heaters – every two years
- Ducted heating ducts – every 5-7 years

Pest Removal

SouthEast Housing Co-operative's pest control policy is in line with RTA and DFFH standards. Houses must be free from all pests and in a clean state before new tenancies begin.

Possums in ceilings and walls, white ants (termites), bees and wasps are the only pests that will be eradicated during a residential rental agreement at SouthEast Housing Co-operative's expense.

Replacement of Sub-Standard Items

Where SouthEast Housing Co-operative's properties do not match DFFH standards, alterations will be implemented over a period of time. For example, the DFFH Standards Manual states all bedrooms should have a minimum of 2 double power points. Where this is not the case, SouthEast Housing Co-operative will install a power point when electrical work is undertaken or as part of a set program.

Non-Standard Items

Air conditioners – barbecues - dishwashers. Whilst one designated air conditioner for one room in each property is a standard item, other air conditioners, barbecues and dishwashers are non-standard items subject to the following:

- a) These items will be repaired and maintained if in an existing property at the commencement of a residential rental agreement and/or were authorised in writing and installed by SouthEast Housing Co-operative. They will be replaced as long as the renter remains in the property and replacement of the items is necessary.
- b) People with disabilities, older people and people with certain medical conditions can apply for the items to be installed into their homes where supporting medical documentation is supplied,
- c) With properties without these items, the renter must seek written authorisation for their installation, and this will be subject to the renter agreeing in writing to repair and maintain these items. The renter must use qualified tradespeople for installation and service.
- d) If the renter vacates the property, the renter is liable for the cost of removing these items unless SouthEast Housing Co-operative decides to retain the items in the property.
- e) If there is structural alteration as a consequence of installation of any of the above items, then, the renter is liable to restore the premises to the condition they were in immediately before the installation, renovation or addition or pay the residential rental providers an amount equal to the reasonable cost of restoring the premises to that condition.

Medical Conditions

If unavailable through another specialist agency, SouthEast Housing Co-operative will consider supplying non-standard items. SouthEast Housing Co-operative will endeavour to meet members' needs. People with disabilities, older people and people with certain medical conditions can apply for non-standard items to be installed into their homes where supporting medical documentation is supplied, preferably by a specialist. In the first instance, SouthEast Housing Co-operative may arrange for the supply of the non-standard item from another specialist agency (see Alterations & Disability Modifications Policy).

Related Legislation, SEHC Documents and Other Documents:

Legislation / Standards:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Residential Tenancies Act 1997• Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
Organisational Documents:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Member Manual• Alterations & Disability Modifications Policy

Policy Management:

Policy owner (role title):	Board
Role responsible for implementing:	Board and CEO
Review arrangements:	Every 3 years via internal review
Next Review Date:	June 2027

Document History:

Date	Controlled Version Number	Author	Approved by	Comment
24 June 2022	1.	S. Morrissey (CEO)	Board	Board approved version migrated for display on SEHC website
25 May 2024	2.	S. Morrissey (CEO)	Board	Interim review to include ban of pools and spas