

Responsive Maintenance and Modifications Procedure

Related Policy: Centacare Housing Services Policy

Purpose & Objectives

Centacare Housing Services (CHS) is committed to ensuring it maintains, repairs, and undertakes all required works on relevant owned and/or leased properties, to ensure that CHS:

- Meets legislative timeframes for undertaking such work.
- Provides its tenants with a safe, secure and healthy environment to live in.

Procedure

Responsive maintenance is day-to-day maintenance or repair works that are carried out on tenanted properties in response to requests for such works, to restore an item or component to its working condition. CHS as the landlord is responsible for maintaining tenanted properties in good repair. Where repair works result from fair wear and tear, such works are undertaken by CHS, as per the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (RTA) (s.68).

Responsive maintenance is carried out immediately and completed within 24 hours for urgent works, within seven (7) days for priority works or within fourteen (14) days for non-urgent works.

This procedure includes:

- The roles of the contractors in carrying out responsive maintenance works
- Arranging for urgent and non-urgent maintenance works to be completed
- Responding to complaints and disputes from contractors and tenants.

Table 1.1: Delegated authorities for maintenance works and goods

Centacare Housing Services Ltd. Staff Limits	Urgent Works	Responsive Works
Tenancy Officer	\$ 1500	\$0.00
Centacare Housing Services Manager or equivalent	\$10,000	\$10,000
CEO	\$250,000	\$250,000

Budgets for responsive maintenance

CHS is responsible for the cost of repairs where the damage is due to fair wear and tear. Responsive maintenance works are assigned the 'Responsive Maintenance' Category of Work (COW), and are charged to the Responsive Housing Services budget.

Maintenance works are assigned to the 'Insurance' COW and are charged against the Insurance budget code when there is an incident report to show that the damage to the property was caused by (for example) a storm or accidental fire. In the case of damage caused as a result of a robbery or squatters, a police report is required.

Requests for responsive maintenance

When a tenant or their representative requests repairs or maintenance works to be completed on the property, CHS assesses the type of work required and the timeframe for completion. Usually this is determined by the nature of the work required.

The requests for maintenance are submitted by the Tenant to the CHS Tenancy Officer. This can occur by submission of an entry on the Maintenance Manager App; phone calls to the Tenancy Officer; or (if applicable) directly reported to the after-hours emergency contacts (for urgent plumbing or electrical works).

The Tenancy Officer determines the urgency and type of repair, and allocates to either the CHS Maintenance Officer (for electrical, general carpentry, general repairs etc.) or to a specialist tradesperson for other works (e.g. Plumber).

CHS is required to complete non-urgent maintenance works and general repairs within 14 days of being given notice of repair.

Tenants can request the Director of Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) to conduct an investigation if the landlord has not carried out the repairs within 14 days. If CAV have conducted an investigation, the tenant has received an inspection report from the Director of CAV and the work has not commenced, the tenant has 60 days in which to make an application to Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) for the repairs to be completed, as per the RTA (s.74).

Categories of maintenance work

1.1 Urgent maintenance works

The Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (RTA) (s.3) defines “urgent repairs”, and states that the landlord must arrange for these works to be completed immediately.

The following repairs are categorised as ‘urgent’ in accordance with the RTA (s.3(1))

- A burst water service
- A blocked or broken sewerage system or toilet
- A serious roof leak
- A gas leak
- A dangerous electrical fault
- Flooding or serious flood damage
- Serious storm or fire damage
- A failure or breakdown of the gas, electricity or water supply to the rented premises
- A failure or breakdown of any essential service or appliance, provided by the landlord, on the rented premises for hot water, cooking, heating or laundering. For example, a total washing machine/dryer failure in communal laundries or a burst hot water service
- An appliance, fitting or fixture provided by the landlord that uses or supplies water that is malfunctioning in a way that results, or will result, in a substantial amount of water being wasted
- Any fault or damage that makes the rented premises unsafe or insecure. The following works are examples of what must be completed as urgent works due to the health or safety risk posed to the tenant or a household member:
 - A faulty or broken smoke alarm
 - Serious damage to external doors, windows or side gates
 - A blocked rubbish chute in a high-rise estate
 - Faulty internal grab rails or shower seats
 - Public lighting
 - Lost, stolen or misplaced keys
 - Any damage of a prescribed class.

. If necessary, the contractor is contacted directly and requested to attend the property to complete the repairs. In some circumstances, urgent works cannot be completed within 24 hours, for example, where large-scale sewerage or drainage works are required. If the property requires such works, an assessment is made as to whether the tenant requires alternative housing while the works are being completed.

CHS endeavour to review and assess all urgent works for repair within 24 hours of notification from the tenant; taking into account the availability of tradespeople, public holidays, access to the tenant's property and/or tenant communication in response to CHS-initiated contact.

There are repair works which comprise urgent and non-urgent components. For example, a lock change that needs to be made to a badly-damaged security door is considered urgent. The replacement of the security door is then given priority status.

After-hours urgent maintenance

CHS provides an after-hours maintenance service for emergency works. These are specified as urgent maintenance works as defined under the RTA (s.3).

After-hours Telephone Referral for Emergency Maintenance

When a tenant requires urgent maintenance assistance after-hours, and the line of work fits with the Urgent Maintenance Works category they can contact the relevant service provider to attend the job. The details of these providers are included on the maintenance process flier given at sign up.

If a tenant is found to have requested after-hours attendance for non-emergency maintenance, the tenant will be liable for the cost of the call-out. The contact details are also available on the CHS Tenant Support Services page of the Centacare website.

1.2 Priority maintenance works:

Priority works are to be completed within seven calendar days so that the maintenance works do not become urgent repairs.

When determining whether non-urgent maintenance works should be completed as a priority, CHS considers whether:

- There would be a significant decrease in the level of the amenity provided to the tenant
- Future costly repairs could be required if the maintenance works are delayed.

For example, a partial appliance failure such as one stove hotplate not working is repaired as priority works so that the tenant is not inconvenienced for an extended period. Alternatively, a breakdown of a washing machine or clothes dryer in a communal laundry where one or more machines can still be used is completed as priority works to ensure that the remaining machines are not placed under stress through overuse.

1.3 Non-urgent maintenance works:

The RTA (s.14) requires that non-urgent maintenance works or repairs are completed within 14 calendar days from the date the works are requested. Examples of works completed as non-urgent maintenance works include:

- Damage to clothes line or hoist
- Internal door that cannot be closed
- Damage to letter box which does not affect the security of the mail
- Damage to floor coverings where the damage is not such that the household's immediate health or safety is affected
- Damage to cupboards.

When works are required to be carried out on a property due to the tenant's failure to maintain the property in good repair a file note is recorded including all relevant details and photos of the damage. Once the repairs have been carried out and final costs have been established, CHA may make an application to the [Victorian Consumer & Administrative Tribunal](#) (VCAT) to seek an Order for Compensation.

No access - The contractor or Maintenance Officer cannot gain access to the property

The contractor and/or Maintenance Officer are required to make up to two attempts to contact the tenant to carry out the maintenance work on the property. They are required to make prior appointments with the tenant to gain entry to the premises to carry out the work.

If the first attempt to gain access to the property is not successful, a contractor calling card is left requesting that the tenant contacts the contractor to arrange an alternative date and time. If the contractor's attempt to gain access fails a second time, the contractor advises CHS and the job may be cancelled. The CHS Maintenance Officer will both ring and text the Tenant to advise of their failed attempt to access the property, and will ask the tenant to call back.

Reporting Repairs

At the commencement of a tenancy, the tenant is advised of the process in reporting maintenance requests during business hours and after hour's emergency maintenance. A flyer is provided in the sign up pack for future reference of the tenant (Appendix 1.01-1). The tenants are also advised of the Tenant page of the Maintenance Manager App reporting maintenance issues.

Prior to raising a job order

Assess the request for maintenance works:

Before a job for maintenance works is registered on Maintenance Manager, the Tenancy Worker (TW) should ask the tenant or the person requesting the maintenance works to provide details of the required works, the reason the works are required and if applicable, how the damage occurred.

Assess the works to determine whether they are urgent, priority or non-urgent by asking relevant questions about the problem. For example, if the tenant states that their bathroom tap is dripping, ask whether enough water is dripping to fill a glass in a day or in an hour, and if it is the hot or cold tap.

Check whether the works have already been arranged or are completed:

Prior to raising a new job in Chintaro check the 'Job History' of that property to determine whether the property is leased, and whether the works requested:

- have already been registered
- have been completed
- Are covered by the 'Defects Warranty', that is, works which were completed within the last three months.
- Are covered by the Structural Builders Warranty period, that is, works which were completed within the last seven years.

Determine the appropriate Type and Category of work:

Determine the category of works and describe the works, for example, 'Building Works' and 'General Repairs', and if the tenant is responsible for the cost of the maintenance works, record this in the 'Instructions' box.

The works have already been arranged:

If the job has been created, check the date the job was registered and the priority status given to the works, that is, urgent, priority or non-urgent maintenance works. If the status is 'urgent' and the works have not been completed within the requisite 24-hour period, details of the works required and timelines for the completion of the works need to be finalised and reason for delay documented.

Confirm the contractor

The Tenancy Officer is responsible for determining whether the Maintenance Officer or a specific contractor is required to undertake the maintenance works, as per the limit in the Delegated Authority Level. Any works anticipated to be over the Delegated Authority Level are to be approved via appropriate management.

Invoicing and payment

Once a job has been completed satisfactorily, the contractor sends the invoice electronically to CHS for approval and payment in accordance with the terms of payment and schedule of rates.

Recording of Expenditure:

Once the invoice has been received it is cross referenced with the original work order to ensure the details are consistent. The details of the work completed and timeframes for completion are added in Chintaro and assist with the bi-annual Maintenance Report to DHHS and the annual KPM reporting to the Housing Registrar. Purchase Orders are not required to be raised prior to urgent works, but must be raised upon receipt of the invoice.

Raising a Purchase Order

For purchases of specific items for CHS properties from the following suppliers (including but not limited to):

- Rodd Lock Smith
- Big W
- AMart

A purchase order must be raised on the Centacare Intranet by the Tenancy Officer, and approved by the appropriate line manager.

Aids, adaptations and disability modifications

A tenant or household member can request aids, adaptations or disability modifications where their existing housing presents a health or safety concern for the household member with special needs. Where the health and safety of tenants or household members are placed at serious risk, works are completed as urgent.

The tenant is required to supply CHS with an Occupational Therapist report identifying the need and providing the correct specifications.

Related Procedures, Practice Guidelines and Forms

Reporting Maintenance Flyer – Process for Reporting Maintenance Requests

Document History

13.03.2019 Amended to include: wording of 'Modifications' in title as per VHR Guidance Note: Agency Publications of Online policies; removal of PO's required for Urgent works; Delegated authority levels for Tenancy Officer for Urgent works. Approved by Board 18/3/2019.

15.06.2020 Amended to include newly created role of CHS Maintenance Officer; introduction of Maintenance Manager App; and to streamline process to facilitate improvement of non-urgent repair timeframes.

Appendix 1.01-1

Reporting Maintenance Flyer - Process for Reporting Maintenance Requests

Maintenance Issues:

Please contact 03 5337 8935 to report all maintenance issues.

Calling this number will ensure that your maintenance request will be dealt with in a timely manner.

Emergency contact- after hours:

In the event of an emergency or urgent repairs according to your 'Residential Tenancy Agreement' an emergency is described as:

- A burst water service
- A blocked or broken toilet
- A serious roof leak
- A gas leak
- A dangerous electrical fault
- Flooding or serious flood damage
- Serious fire or storm damage
- A breakdown of the water, gas or electricity supply to the premises
- A failure or breakdown of any essential service such as hot water service or stove/oven
- Any fault that causes the premises to be unsafe or not secure.

Please contact:

[Ballarat Emergency Plumbing:](#)

[0408 342 300](#)

[Ballarat Electrical Company:](#)

[0418 362 840](#)