

Montana Landlord Tenant Duties

70-24-301. Duty to disclose name of person responsible. (1) A landlord or a person authorized to enter into a rental agreement on his behalf shall disclose to the tenant in writing at or before the commencement of the tenancy the name and address of:

(a) the person authorized to manage the premises; and
(b) the owner of the premises or a person authorized to act for the owner for the purpose of service of process and receiving notices and demands.

(2) The information required to be furnished by this section shall be kept current and in writing, and this section extends to and is enforceable against any successor landlord, owner, or manager.

(3) A person who fails to comply with subsection (1) becomes an agent of each person who is a landlord for the purpose of:

(a) service of process and receiving notices and demands; and
(b) performing the obligations of the landlord under this chapter and under the rental agreement and expending or making available for that purpose all rent collected from the premises.

70-24-302. Landlord to deliver possession of dwelling unit. (1) At the commencement of the term, a landlord shall deliver possession of the premises to the tenant in compliance with the rental agreement and 70-24-303. A landlord may bring an action for possession against a person wrongfully in possession.

(2) If a landlord accepts rent or a deposit from a person intending to occupy the premises, the landlord is considered to have given consent for the person to take possession of the property and to have created a landlord-tenant relationship.

70-24-303. Landlord to maintain premises -- agreement that tenant perform duties -- limitation of landlord's liability for failure of smoke detector. (1) A landlord:

(a) shall comply with the requirements of applicable building and housing codes materially affecting health and safety in effect at the time of original construction in all dwelling units where construction is completed after July 1, 1977;

(b) may not knowingly allow any tenant or other person to engage in any activity on the premises that creates a reasonable potential that the premises may be damaged or destroyed or that neighboring tenants may be injured by any of the following:

(i) criminal production or manufacture of dangerous drugs, as prohibited by 45-9-110;

(ii) operation of an unlawful clandestine laboratory, as prohibited by 45-9-132;

or

- (iii) gang-related activities, as prohibited by Title 45, chapter 8, part 4;
 - (c) shall make repairs and do whatever is necessary to put and keep the premises in a fit and habitable condition;
 - (d) shall keep all common areas of the premises in a clean and safe condition;
 - (e) shall maintain in good and safe working order and condition all electrical, plumbing, sanitary, heating, ventilating, air-conditioning, and other facilities and appliances, including elevators, supplied or required to be supplied by the landlord;
 - (f) shall, unless otherwise provided in a rental agreement, provide and maintain appropriate receptacles and conveniences for the removal of ashes, garbage, rubbish, and other waste incidental to the occupancy of the dwelling unit and arrange for their removal;
 - (g) shall supply running water and reasonable amounts of hot water at all times and reasonable heat between October 1 and May 1, except if the building that includes the dwelling unit is not required by law to be equipped for that purpose or the dwelling unit is so constructed that heat or hot water is generated by an installation within the exclusive control of the tenant; and
 - (h) shall install, in accordance with rules adopted by the department of justice, an approved smoke detector in each dwelling unit under the landlord's control. Upon commencement of a rental agreement, the landlord shall verify that the smoke detector in the dwelling unit is in good working order. The tenant shall maintain the smoke detector in good working order during the tenant's rental period. For purposes of this subsection, an approved smoke detector is a device that is capable of detecting visible or invisible particles of combustion and that bears a label or other identification issued by an approved testing agency having a service for inspection of materials and workmanship at the factory during fabrication and assembly.
- (2) If the duty imposed by subsection (1)(a) is greater than a duty imposed by subsections (1)(b) through (1)(h), a landlord's duty must be determined by reference to subsection (1)(a).
- (3) A landlord and tenant of a one-, two-, or three-family residence may agree in writing that the tenant perform the landlord's duties specified in subsections (1)(f) and (1)(g) and specified repairs, maintenance tasks, alteration, and remodeling but only if the transaction is entered into in good faith and not for the purpose of evading the obligations of the landlord.
- (4) A landlord and tenant of a one-, two-, or three-family residence may agree that the tenant is to perform specified repairs, maintenance tasks, alterations, or remodeling only if:
- (a) the agreement of the parties is entered into in good faith and not for the purpose of evading the obligations of the landlord and is set forth in a separate writing signed by the parties and supported by adequate consideration;
 - (b) the work is not necessary to cure noncompliance with subsection (1)(a); and
 - (c) the agreement does not diminish the obligation of the landlord to other tenants in the premises.

(5) The landlord is not liable for damages caused as a result of the failure of the smoke detector required under subsection (1)(h).

70-24-304. Transfer of premises or termination of management -- relief from liability. (1) Unless otherwise agreed, a landlord who conveys, in a good faith sale to a bona fide purchaser, premises that include a dwelling unit subject to a rental agreement is relieved of liability under the rental agreement and this chapter as to events occurring after written notice to the tenant of the conveyance. He remains liable to the tenant for all security recoverable by the tenant pursuant to chapter 25 of this title and all prepaid rent.

(2) Unless otherwise agreed, a manager of premises that include a dwelling unit is relieved of liability under the rental agreement and this chapter as to events occurring after written notice to the tenant of the termination of his management.

70-24-305. Transfer of premises by tenant. A tenant who vacates a dwelling unit during the term of a tenancy may not allow the possession of the property to be transferred to a third person or sublet the property unless the landlord or the landlord's agent has consented in writing.

70-24-311. Landlord authorized to adopt rules. (1) A landlord may adopt a rule concerning the tenant's use and occupancy of the premises. A rule is enforceable against the tenant only if:

(a) its purpose is to promote the convenience, safety, or welfare of the occupants in the premises, preserve the landlord's property from abusive use, or make a fair distribution of services and facilities held out for the tenants generally;

(b) it is reasonably related to the purpose for which it is adopted;

(c) it applies to all occupants in the premises in a fair manner;

(d) it is sufficiently explicit in its prohibition, direction, or limitation of the tenant's conduct to fairly inform the tenant of what the tenant must or must not do to comply;

(e) it is not for the purpose of evading the obligations of the landlord; and

(f) the tenant has notice of it at the time that the tenant enters into the rental agreement or when it is adopted.

(2) A rule adopted by a landlord must be in writing and must be given to each tenant residing on the premises and to each new tenant upon arrival.

(3) If a rule is adopted after a tenant enters into a rental agreement that works a substantial modification of the tenant's bargain, it is not valid until 7 days after written notice to the tenant in the case of a week to week tenancy or 30 days' written notice in the case of tenancies from month to month.

70-24-312. Access to premises by landlord. (1) A tenant may not unreasonably withhold consent to the landlord or the landlord's agent to enter into the dwelling unit in order to inspect the premises, make necessary or agreed repairs, decorations, alterations, or improvements, supply necessary or agreed

services, or exhibit the dwelling unit to prospective or actual purchasers, mortgagees, tenants, workmen, or contractors.

(2) A landlord may enter the dwelling unit without consent of the tenant in case of emergency.

(3) A landlord may not abuse the right of access or use it to harass the tenant. Except in case of emergency or unless it is impracticable to do so, the landlord shall give the tenant at least 24 hours' notice of the intent to enter and may enter only at reasonable times.

(4) A landlord has no other right of access except:

(a) pursuant to court order;

(b) as permitted by 70-24-425 and 70-24-426(2); or

(c) when the tenant has abandoned or surrendered the premises.

(5) A tenant may not remove a lock or replace or add a lock not supplied by the landlord to the premises without the written permission of the landlord. If a tenant removes a lock or replaces or adds a lock not supplied by the landlord to the premises, the tenant shall provide the landlord with a key to ensure that the landlord will have the right of access as provided by this chapter.

70-24-314. Resident associations -- meetings. The membership of a resident association may elect officers of the association at a meeting at which a majority of the members are present. All residents may attend meetings.

70-24-321. Tenant to maintain dwelling unit. (1) A tenant shall:

(a) comply with all obligations primarily imposed upon tenants by applicable provisions of building and housing codes materially affecting health and safety;

(b) keep that part of the premises that the tenant occupies and uses as reasonably clean and safe as the condition of the premises permits;

(c) dispose from the dwelling unit all ashes, garbage, rubbish, and other waste in a clean and safe manner;

(d) keep all plumbing fixtures in the dwelling unit or used by the tenant as clean as their condition permits;

(e) use in a reasonable manner all electrical, plumbing, sanitary, heating, ventilating, air-conditioning, and other facilities and appliances, including elevators, in the premises;

(f) conduct oneself and require other persons on the premises with the tenant's consent to conduct themselves in a manner, that will not disturb the tenant's neighbors' peaceful enjoyment of the premises; and

(g) use the parts of the premises, including the living room, bedroom, kitchen, bathroom, and dining room, in a reasonable manner, considering the purposes for which they were designed and intended. This section does not preclude the right of the tenant to operate a limited business or cottage industry on the premises, subject to state and local laws, if the landlord has consented in writing. The landlord may not unreasonably withhold consent if the limited business or cottage industry is operated within reasonable rules of the landlord.

(2) A tenant may not destroy, deface, damage, impair, or remove any part of the premises or permit any person to do so.

(3) A tenant may not engage or knowingly allow any person to engage in any activity on the premises that creates a reasonable potential that the premises may be damaged or destroyed or that neighboring tenants may be injured by any of the following:

(a) criminal production or manufacture of dangerous drugs, as prohibited by 45-9-110;

(b) operation of an unlawful clandestine laboratory, as prohibited by 45-9-132;
or

(c) gang-related activities, as prohibited by Title 45, chapter 8, part 4.

70-24-322. Tenant to occupy as dwelling unit only -- extended absence. (1) Unless otherwise agreed, a tenant shall occupy his dwelling unit only as a dwelling unit.

(2) The rental agreement may require that the tenant notify the landlord of an anticipated extended absence from the premises in excess of 7 days no later than the first day of the extended absence.

70-24-401. Administration of remedies -- enforcement. (1) The remedies provided by this chapter must be administered so that an aggrieved party may recover appropriate damages. The aggrieved party has a duty to mitigate damages.

(2) A right or obligation declared by this chapter is enforceable by action unless the provision declaring it specifies a different and limited effect.

(3) Rules and regulations that are not a part of this chapter and that affect the relationship between the landlord and tenant must be uniformly and fairly applied and enforced.

70-24-402. Settlement of disputed claim or right. A claim or right arising under this chapter or on a rental agreement, if disputed in good faith, may be settled by agreement.

70-24-403. Prohibited provision in rental agreement -- unenforceability -- damages. (1) A provision prohibited by 70-24-202 included in a rental agreement is unenforceable.

(2) If a party purposefully uses a rental agreement containing provisions known by him to be prohibited, the other party may recover, in addition to his actual damages, an amount up to 3 months' periodic rent.

70-24-404. Unconscionability -- court discretion to refuse enforcement.

(1) If the court, as a matter of law, finds that:

(a) a rental agreement or any provision thereof is unconscionable, the court may refuse to enforce the agreement or enforce the remainder of the agreement without the unconscionable provision to avoid an unconscionable result; or

(b) a settlement in which a party waives or agrees to forego a claim or right under this chapter or under a rental agreement is unconscionable, the court may

refuse to enforce the settlement, enforce the remainder of the settlement without the unconscionable provision, or limit the application of any unconscionable provision to avoid an unconscionable result.

(2) If unconscionability is put into issue by a party or by the court upon its own motion, the parties shall be afforded a reasonable opportunity to present evidence as to the setting, purpose, and effect of the rental agreement or settlement to aid the court in making the determination.

70-24-405. Failure of landlord to deliver possession -- tenant's remedies.

(1) If the landlord fails to deliver possession of the dwelling unit to the tenant as provided in 70-24-302, rent abates until possession is delivered and the tenant may:

(a) terminate the rental agreement upon at least 5 days' written notice to the landlord and, upon termination, the landlord shall return all prepaid rent and security; or

(b) demand performance of the rental agreement by the landlord and, if the tenant elects, maintain an action for possession of the dwelling unit against the landlord or a person wrongfully in possession and recover the actual damages sustained by him.

(2) If a person's failure to deliver possession is purposeful and not in good faith, an aggrieved party may recover from that person an amount not more than 3 months' periodic rent or treble damages, whichever is greater.

70-24-406. Failure of landlord to maintain premises -- tenant's remedies.

(1) Except as provided in this chapter, if there is a noncompliance with 70-24-303 affecting health and safety, the tenant may:

(a) deliver a written notice to the landlord specifying the acts and omissions constituting the breach and that the rental agreement will terminate upon a date not less than 30 days after receipt of the notice if the breach is not remedied in 14 days. If the noncompliance results in a case of emergency and the landlord fails to remedy the situation within 3 working days after written notice by the tenant of the situation and the tenant's intention to terminate the rental agreement, the tenant may terminate the rental agreement. The rental agreement terminates as provided in the notice subject to the following exceptions:

(i) if the breach is remediable by repairs, the payment of damages, or otherwise and the landlord adequately remedies the breach before the date specified in the notice, the rental agreement does not terminate by reason of the breach;

(ii) if substantially the same act or omission which constituted a prior noncompliance of which notice was given recurs within 6 months, the tenant may terminate the rental agreement upon at least 14 days' written notice specifying the breach and the date of termination of the rental agreement;

(iii) the tenant may not terminate for a condition caused by the tenant, a member of the tenant's family, or other persons on the premises with the tenant's consent.

(b) make repairs that do not cost more than 1 month's rent and deduct the cost from the rent if the tenant has given the landlord notice and the landlord has not made the repairs within a reasonable time. If the repair is required in a case of emergency and the landlord has not made the repairs, the tenant may have repairs made only by a person qualified to make the repairs.

(2) Except as provided in this chapter, the tenant may recover actual damages and obtain injunctive relief for any noncompliance by the landlord with the rental agreement or 70-24-303.

(3) The remedy provided in subsection (2) of this section is in addition to a right of the tenant arising under subsection (1).

(4) If the rental agreement is terminated, the landlord shall return all security recoverable by the tenant pursuant to chapter 25 of this title.

70-24-407. Damages for minor violations by landlord. If the landlord fails to comply with the rental agreement or 70-24-303 and the reasonable cost of compliance is less than the 1 month's rent, the tenant may recover damages for the breach under 70-24-406(2).

70-24-408. Purposeful or negligent failure to provide essential services -- tenant's remedies. (1) If contrary to the rental agreement or 70-24-303 the landlord purposefully or negligently fails to supply heat, running water, hot water, electric, gas, or other essential services, the tenant may give written notice to the landlord specifying the breach and may:

(a) procure reasonable amounts of heat, hot water, running water, electricity, gas, and other essential services during the period of the landlord's noncompliance and deduct their actual and reasonable cost from the rent;

(b) recover damages based upon the diminution in the fair rental value of the dwelling unit; or

(c) procure reasonable substitute housing during the period of the landlord's noncompliance, in which case the tenant is excused from paying rent for the period of the landlord's noncompliance.

(2) If the tenant proceeds under this section, he may not proceed under 70-24-406 or 70-24-407 as to that breach.

(3) Rights of the tenant under this section do not arise until he has given notice to the landlord and the landlord has had a reasonable opportunity to correct the conditions or if the conditions were caused by the act or omission of the tenant, a member of his family, or other person on the premises with his consent.

70-24-409. Fire or casualty damage -- rights of tenant. (1) If the dwelling unit or premises are damaged or destroyed by fire or casualty to an extent that enjoyment of the dwelling unit is substantially impaired, the tenant may:

(a) immediately vacate the premises and notify the landlord in writing within 14 days thereafter of his intention to terminate the rental agreement, in which case the rental agreement terminates as of the date of vacating; or

(b) if continued occupancy is lawful, vacate any part of the dwelling unit

rendered unusable by the fire or casualty, in which case the tenant's liability for rent is reduced in proportion to the diminution in the fair rental value of the dwelling unit.

(2) This section does not apply when the fire and casualty damage was caused by the purposeful or negligent act of the tenant, the tenant's family, or guests.

(3) If the rental agreement is terminated, the landlord shall return all security recoverable pursuant to chapter 25 of this title and all prepaid rent. Accounting for rent in the event of termination or apportionment shall be made as of the date of the fire or casualty.

70-24-410. Unlawful or unreasonable entry by landlord -- tenant's remedies. If the landlord makes an unlawful entry or a lawful entry in an unreasonable manner or makes repeated demands for entry otherwise lawful but which have the effect of unreasonably harassing the tenant, the tenant may either obtain injunctive relief to prevent the recurrence of the conduct or terminate the rental agreement. In either case the tenant may recover actual damages.

70-24-411. Unlawful ouster, exclusion, or diminution of service -- tenant's remedies. If a landlord unlawfully removes or excludes the tenant from the premises or purposefully diminishes services to the tenant by interrupting or causing the interruption of heat, running water, hot water, electricity, gas, or other essential services, the tenant may recover possession or terminate the rental agreement and, in either case, recover an amount not more than 3 months' periodic rent or treble damages, whichever is greater. If the rental agreement is terminated, the landlord shall return all security recoverable pursuant to chapter 25 of this title and all prepaid rent.

70-24-421. Action for nonpayment of rent -- tenant's counterclaim. (1) In an action for possession based upon nonpayment of the rent or in an action for rent when the tenant is in possession, the tenant may counterclaim for any amount he may recover under the rental agreement or this chapter. The court from time to time may order the tenant to pay into court all or part of the rent accrued and thereafter accruing and shall determine the amount due to each party. The party to whom a net amount is owed shall be paid first from the money paid into court and the balance by the other party. The court may at any time release money paid into the court to either party if the parties so agree or if the court finds a party entitled to the sums released. If no rent remains due after application of this section, judgment shall be entered for the tenant in the action for possession.

(2) In an action for rent when the tenant is not in possession, he may counterclaim as provided in subsection (1) of this section but is not required to pay any rent into court.

70-24-422. Noncompliance of tenant generally -- landlord's right of termination -- damages -- injunction. (1) Except as provided in this chapter, if there is a noncompliance by the tenant with the rental agreement or a noncompliance with 70-24-321, the landlord may deliver a written notice to the tenant pursuant to 70-24-108 specifying the acts and omissions constituting the noncompliance and that the rental agreement will terminate upon a date specified in the notice not less than the minimum number of days after receipt of the notice provided for in this section. The rental agreement terminates as provided in the notice, subject to the following:

(a) If the noncompliance is remediable by repairs, the payment of damages, or otherwise and the tenant adequately remedies the noncompliance before the date specified in the notice, the rental agreement does not terminate.

(b) If the noncompliance involves an unauthorized pet, the notice period is 3 days.

(c) If the noncompliance involves unauthorized persons residing in the rental unit, the notice period is 3 days.

(d) If the noncompliance is not listed in subsection (1)(b) or (1)(c), the notice period is 14 days.

(e) If substantially the same act or omission that constituted a prior noncompliance of which notice was given recurs within 6 months, the landlord may terminate the rental agreement upon at least 5 days' written notice specifying the noncompliance and the date of the termination of the rental agreement.

(2) If rent is unpaid when due and the tenant fails to pay rent within 3 days after written notice by the landlord of nonpayment and the landlord's intention to terminate the rental agreement if the rent is not paid within that period, the landlord may terminate the rental agreement.

(3) If the tenant destroys, defaces, damages, impairs, or removes any part of the premises in violation of 70-24-321(2), the landlord may terminate the rental agreement upon giving 3 days' written notice specifying the noncompliance under the provisions of 70-24-321(2).

(4) If the tenant creates a reasonable potential that the premises may be damaged or destroyed or that neighboring tenants may be injured, as evidenced by the tenant being arrested for or charged with an act that violates the provisions of 70-24-321(3), the landlord may terminate the rental agreement upon giving 3 days' written notice specifying the violation and noncompliance under the provisions of 70-24-321(3).

(5) Except as provided in this chapter, the landlord may recover actual damages and obtain injunctive relief for any noncompliance by the tenant with the rental agreement or 70-24-321. Except as provided in subsection (6), if the tenant's noncompliance is purposeful, the landlord may recover treble damages.

(6) Treble damages may not be recovered for the tenant's early termination of the tenancy.

(7) The landlord is not bound by this section in the event that the landlord elects to use the 30-day notice for termination of tenancy as provided in 70-24-441.

70-24-423. Waiver of landlord's right to terminate for breach. Acceptance by the landlord of full payment of rent due is a waiver of a claimed breach of a rental agreement only when the claimed breach is the nonpayment of rent. Acceptance of full payment of rent due when a claimed breach is something other than the nonpayment of rent does not constitute a waiver of any right. The acceptance of partial payment of rent due does not constitute a waiver of any right.

70-24-424. Refusal of access -- landlord's remedies. (1) If the tenant refuses to allow lawful access, the landlord may either obtain injunctive relief to compel access or terminate the rental agreement. In either case the landlord may recover actual damages.

(2) If a tenant removes a lock or replaces or adds a lock not supplied by the landlord to the premises and fails to provide a key as required by 70-24-312(5), the landlord may either obtain injunctive relief or terminate the rental agreement.

70-24-425. Failure of tenant to maintain dwelling -- landlord's right to enter and repair. If there is noncompliance by the tenant with 70-24-321 affecting health and safety that can be remedied by repair, replacement of a damaged item, or cleaning and the tenant fails to comply as promptly as conditions require in case of emergency or within 14 days after written notice by the landlord specifying the breach and requesting that the tenant remedy it within that period of time, the landlord may enter the dwelling unit and cause the work to be done in a workmanlike manner and submit an itemized bill for the actual and reasonable cost, the fair and reasonable cost, or the fair and reasonable value thereof as rent on the next date periodic rent is due or, if the rental agreement has terminated, for immediate payment.

70-24-426. Remedies for absence or abandonment. (1) If the rental agreement requires the tenant to give notice to the landlord of an anticipated extended absence in excess of 7 days, as provided for in 70-24-322, and the tenant fails to do so, the landlord may recover actual damages from the tenant.

(2) During an absence of the tenant in excess of 7 days, the landlord may enter the dwelling unit at times reasonably necessary.

(3) If the tenant abandons the dwelling unit, the landlord shall make reasonable efforts to rent it at a fair rental. If the landlord rents the dwelling unit for a term beginning before the expiration of the rental agreement, the rental agreement terminates as of the date of the tenancy. If the landlord fails to use reasonable efforts to rent the dwelling unit at a fair rental or if the landlord accepts the abandonment as a surrender, the rental agreement is terminated by the landlord as of the date the landlord has notice of the abandonment. If the tenancy is from month to month or week to week, the term of the rental agreement for this purpose is a month or a week, as the case may be.

70-24-427. Landlord's remedies after termination -- action for possession. (1) If the rental agreement is terminated, the landlord has a claim for possession and for rent and a separate claim for actual damages for any breach of the rental agreement.

(2) An action filed pursuant to subsection (1) in a court must be heard within 20 days after the tenant's appearance or the answer date stated in the summons, except that if the rental agreement is terminated because of noncompliance under 70-24-321(3), the action must be heard within 5 business days after the tenant's appearance or the answer date stated in the summons. If the action is appealed to the district court, the hearing must be held within 20 days after the case is transmitted to the district court, except that if the rental agreement is terminated because of noncompliance under 70-24-321(3), the hearing must be held within 5 business days after the case is transmitted to the district court.

(3) The landlord and tenant may stipulate to a continuance of the hearing beyond the time limit in subsection (2) without the necessity of an undertaking.

(4) In a landlord's action for possession filed pursuant to subsection (1), the court shall rule on the action within 5 days after the hearing.

70-24-428. Landlord's recovery of possession limited. Except in the case of abandonment, surrender, or as permitted in this chapter, a landlord may not recover or take possession of the dwelling unit by action or otherwise, including purposeful diminution of services to the tenant by interrupting or causing the interruption of heat, running water, hot water, electricity, gas, or other essential services.

70-24-429. Holdover remedies -- consent to continued occupancy -- tenant's response to service in action for possession. (1) If the tenant remains in possession without the landlord's consent after expiration of the term of the rental agreement or its termination, the landlord may bring an action for possession. If the tenant's holdover is purposeful and not in good faith, the landlord may recover an amount not more than 3 months' periodic rent or treble damages, whichever is greater.

(2) In an action for possession or unlawful holdover, the provisions of Title 25, chapter 23, apply, except that the time for filing an answer under Rule 4C(2)(b) is 10 days after service of summons and complaint, exclusive of the date of service.

(3) If the landlord consents to the tenant's continued occupancy, 70-24-201(2)(e) applies.

70-24-430. Disposition of personal property abandoned by tenant after termination. (1) If a tenancy terminates in any manner except by court order and the landlord reasonably believes that the tenant has abandoned all personal property that the tenant has left on the premises and a period of time of at least 5 days has elapsed since the occurrence of events upon which the landlord formed that belief, the landlord may remove the property from the premises.

(2) The landlord shall inventory and store all goods, chattels, and personal property of the tenant in a place of safekeeping and shall exercise reasonable

care for the property. The landlord may charge a reasonable storage and labor charge if the property is stored by the landlord, plus the cost of removal of the property to the place of storage. The landlord may store the property in a commercial storage company, in which case the storage cost includes the actual storage charge plus the cost of removal of the property to the place of storage.

(3) After complying with subsections (1) and (2), the landlord shall:

(a) make a reasonable attempt to notify the tenant in writing that the property must be removed from the place of safekeeping;

(b) notify the local law enforcement office of the property held by the landlord;

(c) make a reasonable effort to determine if the property is secured or otherwise encumbered; and

(d) send a notice by certified mail to the last-known address of the tenant, stating that at a specified time, not less than 15 days after mailing the notice, the property will be disposed of if not removed.

(4) The landlord may dispose of the property after complying with subsection (3) by:

(a) selling all or part of the property at a public or private sale; or

(b) destroying or otherwise disposing of all or part of the property if the landlord reasonably believes that the value of the property is so low that the cost of storage or sale exceeds the reasonable value of the property.

(5) If the tenant, upon receipt of the notice provided in subsection (3), responds in writing to the landlord on or before the day specified in the notice that the tenant intends to remove the property and does not do so within 7 days after delivery of the tenant's response, the tenant's property is conclusively presumed to be abandoned. If the tenant removes the property, the landlord is entitled to storage costs for the period that the property remains in safekeeping, plus the cost of removal of the property to the place of storage. Reasonable storage costs are allowed a landlord who stores the property, and actual storage costs are allowed a landlord who stores the property in a commercial storage company. A landlord is entitled to payment of the storage costs allowed under this subsection before the tenant may remove the property.

(6) The landlord is not responsible for any loss to the tenant resulting from storage unless the loss is caused by the landlord's purposeful or negligent act. On the event of purposeful violation, the landlord is liable for actual damages.

(7) A public or private sale authorized by this section must be conducted under the provisions of 30-9A-601 or the sheriff's sale provisions of Title 25, chapter 13, part 7.

(8) The landlord may deduct from the proceeds of the sale the reasonable costs of notice, storage, labor, and sale and any delinquent rent or damages owing on the premises and shall remit to the tenant the remaining proceeds, if any, together with an itemized accounting. If the tenant cannot after due diligence be found, the remaining proceeds must be deposited with the county treasurer of the county in which the sale occurred and, if not claimed within 3 years, must revert to the general fund of the county available for general purposes.

70-24-431. Retaliatory conduct by landlord prohibited. (1) Except as provided in this section, a landlord may not retaliate by increasing rent, by decreasing services, or by bringing or threatening to bring an action for possession after the tenant:

(a) has complained of a violation applicable to the premises materially affecting health and safety to a governmental agency charged with responsibility for enforcement of a building or housing code;

(b) has complained to the landlord in writing of a violation under 70-24-303; or

(c) has organized or become a member of a tenant's union or similar organization.

(2) If the landlord acts in violation of subsection (1) of this section, the tenant is entitled to the remedies provided in 70-24-411 and has a defense in any retaliatory action against the tenant for possession.

(3) In an action by or against the tenant, evidence of a complaint within 6 months before the alleged act of retaliation creates a rebuttable presumption that the landlord's conduct was in retaliation. The presumption does not arise if the tenant made the complaint after notice of a proposed rent increase or diminution of services. For purposes of this section, "rebuttable presumption" means that the trier of fact is required to find the existence of the fact presumed unless and until evidence is introduced that would support a finding of its nonexistence.

(4) Subsections (1), (2), and (3) do not prevent a landlord from bringing an action for possession if:

(a) the violation of the applicable building or housing code was caused primarily by lack of reasonable care by the tenant, a member of the tenant's family, or any other persons on the premises with the tenant's consent;

(b) the tenant is in default in rent; or

(c) compliance with the applicable building or housing code requires alteration, remodeling, or demolition that would effectively deprive the tenant of use of the dwelling unit.

(5) The maintenance of an action under subsection (4) of this section does not release the landlord from liability under 70-24-405(2).