
A Guide to Staying Warm in Chicago

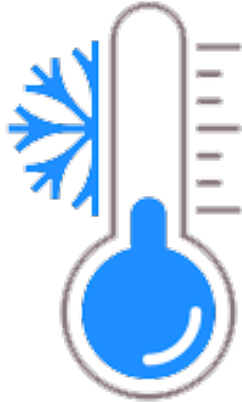
Tenants' Rights in the Winter



Chicago gets cold!

The average high temperature in Chicago during the winter is right around freezing.

In one sampling, between December 27,



2017 and January 4, 2018, there were 1,575 complaints made to 311 and 1,272 inspections conducted.

It is your landlord's responsibility to make sure your apartment is adequately heated!

YOUR RIGHTS IN THE WINTER under Chicago's Residential Landlord and Tenant Ordinance (RLTO):

From September 15 through June 1:

68 degrees from 8:30 AM to 10:30 PM

66 degrees from 10:30 PM to 8:30 AM

Landlords face fines of up to \$500 per day, per violation, for each day they do not supply adequate heat. The reason for lack of heat does not matter—landlords must follow the law, and apartments must be heated.

ESSENTIAL SERVICES

Heat is considered an **essential service**, along with water, electricity, gas, and plumbing.

What do I do if I do not have an essential service?

- ◆ Document evidence—take a photograph of a thermometer displaying the temperature, with proof of the time and date.
- ◆ Call 311 and get a reference number
- ◆ Send a letter to your landlord—make sure all communication is in writing. (*Ask an ATU member about our sample letters.*)
- ◆ If the landlord does not make repairs/reactivate service within **24 HOURS**, you can:
 - ◆ Purchase a space heater and deduct the cost from your next rent payment.
 - ◆ Pay the utility company yourself, and deduct the amount from your rent.
 - ◆ Withhold a portion of rent to reflect the reduced value of the unit.
 - ◆ If forced to find temporary substitute housing, you can withhold rent as long as you are displaced.

TAKE DIRECT ACTION

In addition to your rights under the RLTO, you can also pressure your landlord by forming a tenants union with your neighbors and doing things like organizing a call-in campaign or sending a delegation to the landlord's home or office.

For more info about direct action tactics, see ATU's Tactics Zine!

URGENT ASSISTANCE

- ◆ **IMPORTANT:** If it gets dangerously cold in your apartment, call 311 and ask for the nearest heating center.
- ◆ Leave the tap dripping overnight so pipes don't freeze/burst.
- ◆ Cost-efficient space heaters can be found at drug and hardware stores for around \$40-50.
- ◆ The **Community and Economic Development Association of Cook County (CEDA)** offers the The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), which provides once-a-year grants to help customers on limited incomes pay their energy bills.
 - ◆ They only take applications in the fall. Call CEDA at 800-571-2332 to ask about your options and the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).
- ◆ **Peoples' Gas "Share the Warmth" Program**
 - ◆ Heating grants to limited and fixed-income households. Eligible customers who make a payment toward their bills receive matching grants of up to \$200.
 - ◆ People in the 60625 zip code can apply at Hanul Family Alliance, 5008 N. Kedzie Ave., or call 773-478-8851 ext. 123 and ask about "Share the Warmth" or call CEDA at 800-571-2332.

**IF YOUR LANDLORD DOES NOT FIX YOUR HEAT
WITHIN 72 HOURS, YOU ARE ALLOWED TO
BREAK YOUR LEASE AND MOVE.**

TIPS & TRICKS FOR STAYING WARM

- ◆ Keep doors of unused rooms or big closets closed.
- ◆ Use a “door sweep” that runs along the bottom of the door to seal it if there’s a noticeable gap.
- ◆ Turning heat down at night and using an electric blanket can cost as low as \$2-3/month (for 8 hours of use).
- ◆ If possible, use your ceiling fan on low in reverse.

INSULATION TIPS

- ◆ Finding air leaks / the source of the issue
 - ◆ On a windy day, carefully hold a lit incense stick next to your windows, doors, and other places where air may leak. If the smoke stream travels horizontally, you found one.
- ◆ Fixing air leaks
 - ◆ Apply weatherstrips or rope caulk to the tops, bottoms, and sides of windows.
 - ◆ Look into getting *window kits* that include plastic wrap to cover windows and insulate.
- ◆ Get wintertime curtains
 - ◆ Thick curtains or window quilts can reduce heat loss through windows. Hang them as close to your windows as possible and let them fall to the floor. On sunny days, pull back the drapes and let the sun warm your apartment.

Autonomous Tenants Union is an all-volunteer collective committed to organizing for housing justice from below and to the left.

As an independent collective based in Chicago, we strategize together to defend and enforce our right to dignified housing.

We believe housing is a human right, not a commodity! We fight for an end to all evictions, and for community control of housing through the building of popular power.

If you would like to get involved or have any questions or feedback, feel free to reach out to us.

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