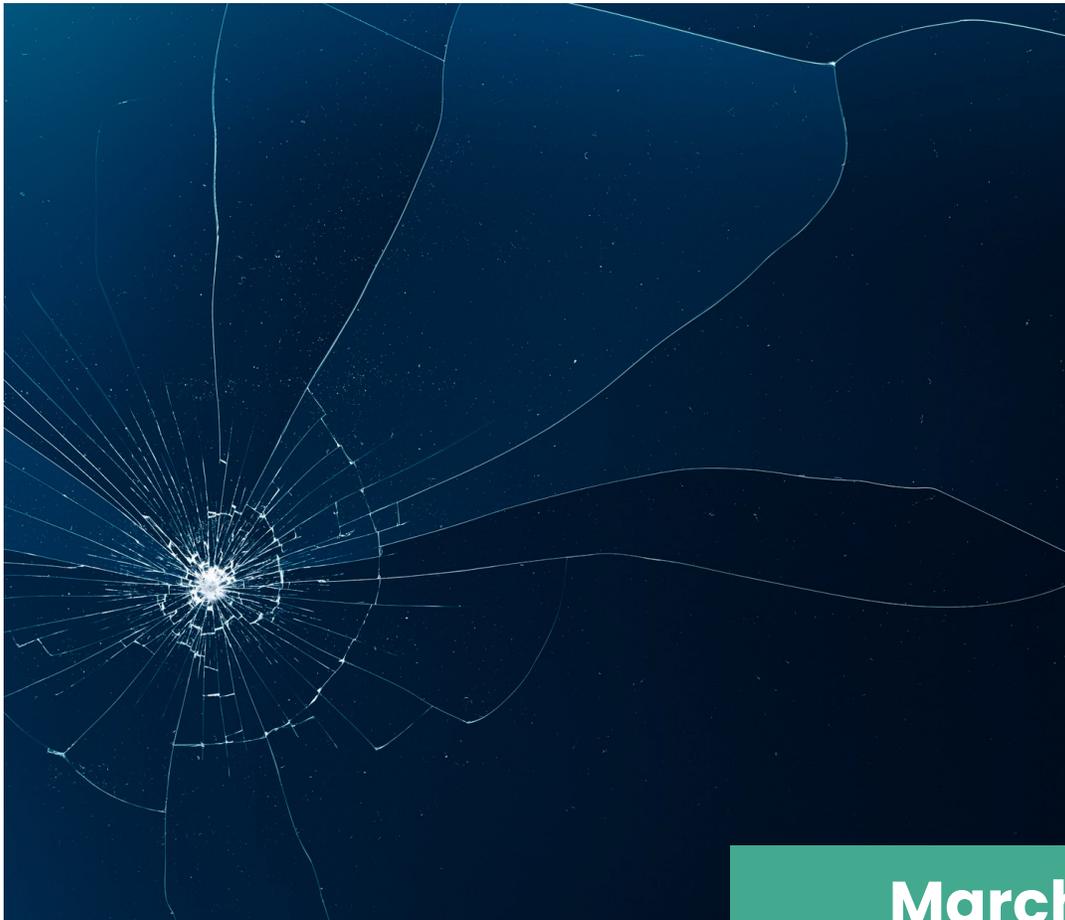


Tenants' Rights: Repairs



March 2026

**Do you have a legal problem?
Call our hotline:**

Statewide Legal Services
1-800-559-1565

What does Connecticut Law about say repairs?

The law says your landlord must

- give you an apartment that is clean, safe, and fit to live in when you move in;
- make sure your apartment can get electricity, heat, and hot/running water; and
- keep the apartment in good condition while you live there.

Your landlord must fix problems like

- peeling paint or broken windows;
- plumbing, electrical, or heating systems that don't work properly;
- rats, roaches, bedbugs, and other pests; and
- a broken smoke detector (or no smoke detector).

You can sue if your landlord does not make needed repairs.

Do I have to pay my rent if the landlord ignores me or takes a long time to make repairs?

Yes. Even if the problems are serious and the landlord is ignoring you, you must keep paying your rent unless a judge says you can stop. You can ask the landlord for permission to make the repairs yourself and subtract the cost from your rent. Do not do this unless you have the landlord's permission in writing. You can also ask the landlord to reimburse you for any damage to your belongings.

What can I do if my landlord won't make repairs?

STEP 1: Ask your landlord to make repairs.

If the repairs are urgent, call the landlord and tell them right away. Ask when they are coming to make these urgent repairs. Some examples of urgent repairs are

- flooding or leaking water, and
- a broken window or a door that won't open or close.

It's best to also ask in writing for repairs to be made. Keep copies of any letters, emails, or text messages that you send. If you see the landlord, ask about the status of your request and make a note in your

Even if your apartment needs repairs, **pay your rent on time.** If you don't, your landlord can evict you.

calendar about what the landlord told you. If your landlord does not make repairs when you ask, go to Step 2.

STEP 2: Make a complaint to the code enforcement office or health department of the city or town where you live.

Call 2-1-1 or go to www.211ct.org to get the phone number for the code enforcement office in your town. It is also possible that the health department in your town enforces the housing or building code. Call and tell them you want to file a complaint, and ask to have someone inspect your apartment. Make sure to write down the day you called and the name of the person you spoke to.

Make every effort to be home when the inspector comes to your apartment.

- Write down the inspector's name.
- Show the inspector everything that needs to be fixed.
- Ask when you can get a copy of their report.
- Go to the inspector's office and get a copy of the report when it is ready.

If you have not heard from the landlord about making the repairs or seen any changes in three weeks, go to Step 3.

STEP 3: Start a lawsuit in court.

You can start a lawsuit if your landlord doesn't fix the problems within 21 days after you filed the complaint with the code enforcement office or health department in your town or city. Remember: You cannot start a court case without first having an inspection (step 2).

The court can order the landlord to make the repairs. You will pay the rent you would have given the landlord to the court clerk instead. You might also get some of your rent money back because the landlord didn't make the repairs on time.

If you think your landlord may try to evict you, start your case **before** you get eviction papers.

If you already got eviction papers, it may be too late to start a repairs case. Talk to a lawyer as soon as possible. Here are some things you can do:

- Call your local Code Enforcement Office right away and ask for an inspection.
- Talk to a lawyer.
- Don't give up. The repairs needed may help you win the eviction case. You can use the landlord's failure to make repairs as a defense in the eviction case against you.

Starting a Lawsuit

1. Fill out the following forms. Staff at the Court Service Center can give you the forms and help you fill them out. You can also get the forms online at www.jud.ct.gov/webforms.

- *Notice of Suit* (#JD-HM-19)
- *Complaint* (#JD-HM-35)

2. Bring the forms to the court.

- Sign them in front of the court clerk, a notary, or a lawyer.
- File them with the clerk's office at the court where your apartment is located.

It costs \$25 to file this case in court. If you can't afford to pay the filing fee, ask the clerk for an *Application for Waiver of Fees* (#JD-CV-120).

3. Go to court on your hearing date and tell the judge what happened. If you have a copy of the inspection report from Step 2, bring it with you to court.

Should I keep paying rent to my landlord?

Once you start your lawsuit, you will pay rent to the court instead of to your landlord. The court clerk will give you a receipt for the money you give to the court. If you have not paid your rent for the current month, pay your rent to the court (cash or money order only).

Keep paying your rent to the court until the judge decides your case. If you don't pay your rent to the court, the court can throw out your case without deciding about the repairs.

What happens next?

After you file the case, the court will send the lawsuit papers to your landlord by certified mail. The inspector will also get a copy of your lawsuit. If your

landlord doesn't accept or pick up the certified letter, you will have to pay a marshal to deliver the papers. You can find a list of marshals at www.jud.ct.gov/faq/marshals.htm or at the clerk's office.

When will the court hearing be scheduled?

The clerk will schedule a court hearing to be held after your landlord gets the papers. If the court does not schedule a hearing within three weeks of when you filed the case, call the clerk's office and ask if they know when they plan to schedule a hearing. The inspector is required by law to bring a copy of the inspection report for your house or apartment to the hearing. To protect yourself, you should make arrangements with the court to have the inspector come to court with the inspection report. See *Will the inspector go to court?* below.

If you can't afford to pay court fees, you can ask the court for a fee waiver. Visit www.ctlaw.help/fees.

The Court Hearing

How do I get ready for the hearing?

- ▶ Make a list of the needed repairs.
- ▶ Note how the problems in your home hurt or caused problems for you or your family.
- ▶ If you can, take photos of the problems in your home. Bring extra copies of the photos for the judge and the landlord.
- ▶ If you have a copy of the inspection report written by your city or town's code enforcement office or health department, bring it with you.
- ▶ You can bring witnesses to court who have seen the problems or who have seen or heard the interactions you had with your landlord about the conditions.
- ▶ The landlord might have their own witnesses at the hearing. Listen closely to what those witnesses tell the judge.
- ▶ The judge will want to hear both sides before they make an order about the case. Remember to be respectful and never interrupt the judge when they are speaking.

Will the inspector go to court?

Not necessarily. As soon as the clerk tells you the date of your hearing, ask the clerk for *subpoena* papers. The subpoena papers tell the inspector to come to court with the inspection report. You will have to pay a marshal to deliver the papers (unless the court gave you a fee waiver). You can get a list of marshals at the court's website or at the clerk's office.

Will my trial start right away?

You and your landlord will speak to a housing mediator first. The mediator will help you try to make an agreement (also called a *stipulation*) instead of having a trial.

If you can make an agreement, then you, the landlord, and the judge will sign it. You will each get a signed copy.

You can also make an agreement on your own with the landlord, but talk to the housing mediator before you sign it.

Warning! Don't sign an agreement if you can't do what it says or if you don't fully understand it.

What if the landlord and I cannot make an agreement?

You will have a trial and a judge will decide your case. Your trial will probably take an hour.

- You and your landlord must each swear to tell the truth.
- When it is your turn to speak, tell the judge about the repairs needed in your apartment and the date(s) you asked for the repairs to be made.
- You may ask the inspector to tell the judge what's wrong with your apartment and to give the judge the inspection report.
- You can ask the judge to order your landlord to
 - make the repairs,
 - give you back the rent you paid for the time that your landlord did not fix the problems, and
 - pay you for damage to your things or your health.

What happens after the hearing?

The judge may ask you and the landlord to go back to court to report on the repairs. Ask the clerk if you have another court date.

If you have another hearing to report on the repairs and the repairs have not been made:

- tell the judge, and
- ask the judge to have someone (called a *receiver*) make the repairs.

You may bring witnesses to court and the same types of proof that you brought to the first hearing. If you want the inspector to go to court and more than 60 days have passed since the first hearing, ask the clerk for a new subpoena.

What happens to the rent money that I paid to the court?

When the repairs have been made and the lawsuit is over, the judge decides who gets the money. You can also make an agreement with your landlord about who gets the money. Make sure it is in writing and give a copy to the court.

If the judge is making the decision, tell the judge why you think you should get the rent money back.

The judge can decide to give

- **you** part or all of the rent money, or
- **the landlord** part or all of the rent money you paid.

Note: If you start a case against the landlord and then later decide not to go to court, the court will give the rent money to the landlord.

Can my landlord evict me if I file a lawsuit?

Your landlord cannot evict you for nonpayment of rent if you are paying your rent to the court as required. However, a landlord may still try to evict you for other reasons.

Do not pay late. Pay your rent within 9 days of the due date.

If your landlord tries to evict you after you start your case, or within six months after you first complained to the code enforcement office about the conditions, then you may have a good defense against eviction based on retaliation. See the legal aid pamphlet, *Evictions and Lockouts*, or go to www.ctlaw.help/eviction.



How to Get Help from Legal Aid

Contact Statewide Legal Services

www.slsct.org

1-800-453-3320 or 860-344-0380

SLS provides free advice to low-income people who have legal problems in Connecticut. For some legal problems, they may send you to another legal aid program or to a volunteer attorney.



Need help with a housing problem?

If you are facing eviction or losing your housing subsidy, you may have the right to a free lawyer. Call 1-800-559-1565 or go to www.EvictionHelpCT.org.

Contact your local legal aid office:

Connecticut Legal Services

www.ctlegal.org

Bridgeport

203-336-3851

1000 Lafayette Blvd.

New Britain

860-225-8678

16 Main St.

New London

860-447-0323

125 Eugene O'Neill Dr.

Stamford

203-348-9216

1177 Summer St.

Waterbury

203-756-8074

255 Bank St., 3rd Fl.

Willimantic

860-456-1761

1125 Main St.

Greater Hartford Legal Aid

www.ghla.org

999 Asylum Ave., Hartford

860-541-5000

New Haven Legal Assistance Association

www.nhlegal.org

205 Orange St., New Haven

203-946-4811

Consumer Law Project for Elders

1-800-296-1467

Help with money and debt problems for people 60+.

Do you know your rights?

Go to www.CTLawHelp.org for free legal information.



For more information, go to www.CTLaw.Help/repairs

This booklet was produced by Connecticut Legal Services, Greater Hartford Legal Aid, New Haven Legal Assistance Association, and Statewide Legal Services of Connecticut. The information in this booklet is based on laws in Connecticut as of 3/2026. This information is not intended as legal advice. For advice on your situation, call Statewide Legal Services or contact a lawyer.