

Repairs and maintenance

Responsive maintenance

Responsive maintenance is day-to-day maintenance or repair works that are carried out on tenanted properties:

- in response to requests for such works; and
- to restore an item or component to its working condition.

NCCH, as landlord, is responsible for maintaining tenanted properties in good repair. Where repair works result from fair wear and tear, such works are undertaken by NCCH as per the **Residential Tenancies Act 2010 (RTA)**.

NCCH is not responsible for carrying out repairs on those properties it leases from the private rental sector, i.e. "headleased properties", unless the required works are not the result of fair wear and tear. These properties that are leased in the private rental market by NCCH and sub-let to social housing tenants. All responsive maintenance required as a result of fair wear and tear and all planned maintenance items is the responsibility of the agent/owner.

Exclusions

This document does not cover the following matters:

- Non-standard items and tenant alterations and additions. A non-standard item is a property component that NCCH does not usually provide or replace. For further information, see [Alterations and Additions](#).
- Tenant responsible maintenance. Tenants are charged for the cost of cleaning, repair or replacement of items which are not the result of fair wear and tear. It is often referred to more simply as "TRM". It is regarded as a "tenant charge" in situations where NCCH had been required to pay the costs of rectification. Refer to [Tenant Responsible Maintenance](#) policies and procedures section for full details on how tenants are to be charged for the cost of rectification works.
- Disability modifications. NCCH has a dedicated program that aims to ensure improvements are made to properties that are required as a result of the specific needs of residents living with disabilities. See Property Modifications for further information

Some variations to policies and procedures may exist as a requirement of specific housing programs operated by NCCH.

Identification and assessment of responsive maintenance items

Identification

Responsive maintenance requests are received from tenants in a number of different ways:

- Tenants contact their local branch office if they have a maintenance issue – this can be by telephone, email or visiting the office;
- Local staff identify responsive maintenance issues when carrying out routine property inspections (typically on a 6 month cycle);

- Tenants report maintenance requests via the NCCH website which generates an e-mail to the Property and Assets team

Assessment

Before a work order is raised, NCCH will 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.

The NCCH officer will 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, NCCH will 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.

NCCH will seek information from the tenant about the circumstances that led to the maintenance being required.

For example, if the tenant states that their rotary clothesline is broken, they will be asked which component of the clothes line requires repair and how the damage occurred. If a tree branch falling onto the clothesline during a storm caused the damage, NCCH is responsible for the cost of the repairs, and the works are charged to the insurance budget. However, if the damage was caused by children swinging on it, the tenant is responsible for its repair or replacement. The works are charged as TRM.

In circumstances where the works required are clearly TRM, the tenant must be advised that they will be charged for the costs of completing the works.

In circumstances where it is unclear as to the cause of the problem, a report from the contractor may be sought once s/he has attended the tenancy.

NCCH will ask the tenant if there are any particular circumstances, particularly their availability during the expected period until completion that should be noted.

Advice

Once the type of works required has been determined and it is known when the responsive maintenance works will be completed, the tenant should be advised that:

- the contractor will make contact to arrange a suitable day and time to complete the works
- they should ask the contractor for identification prior to allowing them to enter their home (Note: NCCH do not provide contractors with identification)
- the contractor will ask them for their signature to verify that they attended the property and completed the works (Note: Where visiting conditions exist at a tenancy, e.g. "2 person visit", the tenant will not be asked to verify the work order
- their signature does not verify the quality of the work done by the contractor
- they should contact the local NCCH if the works are not completed satisfactorily or within the specified timelines
- (where relevant) action will commence for the recovery of costs for repairs or maintenance works that are considered to be their responsibility, as detailed in the NCCH TRM policies and procedures.

Response times

NCCH has set standard response times to all repairs requests from tenants. Particularly when issuing work orders for "emergency" and "urgent" repairs, contractors should be reminded of our expectations for these classifications of works.

Category	Description	Time Frame
Emergency	There is a threat to a person's life or serious damage to the property	4 hours
Urgent	As defined by the s.62 of the Act (unless considered an emergency repair by NCCH)	24 hours
Inspection required	An inspection is required in order to substantiate the work required	7 days
Routine repair	All other repairs. No threat to safety of the tenant	21 days

Where a request from a tenant is not an emergency or an urgent matter – and it requires further investigation via an *****

No access by contractor

The contractor is required to make 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 in the work order.

If the first attempt to gain access to the property is not successful, a contractor calling card is left requesting that the tenant contact the contractor to arrange an alternative date and time. If the contractor's attempt to gain access fails a second time, the contractor advises the local officer that raised the job, and the job may be cancelled.

Emergency and Urgent Work Orders

Emergency repairs

An emergency repair is required where there is a threat to a person's safety or serious damage to the property. An urgent repair is as defined by the s.62 of the Act (unless considered an emergency repair by NCCH).

The following works must be completed within 4 hours:

- 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 serious fault in a staircase in the rented premises
- a serious fault in external stairs, handrails, ramps, pathways which could result in personal injury

Urgent repairs

The following works must be completed within 24 hours:

- a blocked or broken sewerage system or toilet
- 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 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
- a faulty or broken smoke alarm
- serious damage to external doors, windows or side gates
- faulty internal grab rails or shower seats
- public lighting

Urgent jobs are raised to commence immediately and to be completed within 24 hours. 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.

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.

Gaining access for urgent works

If the contractor is unable to gain access and the work order raised refers to a significant health and safety risk and it is not completed, NCCH have the legal right to enter the property without the tenant's permission in order to carry out urgent works (see section 55 (2) (c) of the Act).

A standard notice is sent to the tenant and suitable arrangements are then made for the contractor to attend and access the property. In such cases, a NCCH staff member will remain with the contractor until the work is completed.

Where a property has been entered, a notification is left in a prominent position (where locks are changed, attach the notice to the front door) advising the tenant of the following:

- why the property has been entered
- contact details of the relevant NCCH office
- a brief description of who entered the property
- the date and time the entry occurred
- that the tenant attend the local NCCH office to discuss the entry
- Where it was necessary to change locks, that their front door locks have been changed and that they can come to the local NCCH office to pick up their keys during office hours. Instructions will be also be given about how to collect the keys from NCCH after hours.

After hours emergency and urgent repairs

NCCH operates an after-hours service for tenants, to ensure that urgent repairs are completed as required during periods where the office is closed.

NCCH has contractors "on-call", covering all of the potentially required category of works (as defined by the definition of urgent repairs under s.62 of the Act). Tenants are advised that they are able to directly contact these contractors, for the completion of urgent works.

Tenants are provided with the latest contact details for after-hours urgent repairs through:

- (Initially) through information provided on their residential tenancies agreement with NCCH; and then through
- Information provided in the quarterly company newsletter to tenants; and
- Information provided in the standard telephone greeting used by NCCH for non-opening hours
- On the company website; and
- As considered necessary, by direct written correspondence

Tenant right to reimbursement for afterhours repairs

Under s.64 of the Act, a tenant has the right to organise and then be reimbursed for urgent repairs they have organized themselves, provided:

- The repair was not required as a result of a breach of the residential tenancies agreement by the tenant (and would be considered by NCCH as TRM)
- Where possible, the tenant gave NCCH a reasonable opportunity to complete the repair
- The tenant made a reasonable attempt to contact NCCH or the scheduled after-hours contact Contractor
- the repairs were carried out, if appropriate, by licensed or otherwise properly qualified persons.

Where staff cannot be satisfied that the tenant has met all the criteria for reimbursement approval (as listed above), the tenant will be requested to make their request in writing.

Headleased properties

All maintenance required at headleased properties (that NCCH regards as being a landlord responsibility) is reported to the owner/agent, either through email or telephone; and are recorded and logged by NCCH.

Specific maintenance items

Pest control

NCCH carries out limited pest control services. Generally, pest control services are provided to common shared areas, such as common gardens or foyers and communal facilities. Pest control services are often charged as TRM. For more information about Pest Control, refer to the TRM procedures of NCCH.

Termites or borer infestation

Termite or borer extermination is considered urgent maintenance, and is to be carried out immediately by a registered qualified pest or termite control agent.

Termite extermination works are managed by the NCCH Property and Development Team (PDT).

Car parking signs

NCCH can provide car parking areas on estates for residents, emergency vehicles, contractors, and residents with disabilities.

NCCH installs car-parking signs so that all drivers entering the estate are aware of the parking regulations for the area.

Gutter cleaning

See TRM procedures for information about gutter-cleaning.

Fire Damage

In the event of notification of fire damage, the matter is referred to NCCH's PDT.

- The PDT team will need to ascertain the degree of damage caused by the fire from the caller and possibly send a team member to assess the damage;
- The member of staff that attends the fire will need to assess the following:-
 - Is the tenant aware the fire has occurred?
 - How much damage has been caused to the property?
 - Does the tenant need to be relocated?
 - What is the composition of the family?
- If there is a minor damage to the property, e.g. smoke or water damage, and the tenant is able to remain in the property then the staff member will identify work required to bring the property back to acceptable standard and place an appropriate work order with a suitable contractor;
- If the tenant needs relocation then the staff member will contact the local tenancy team, who will then negotiate with the tenant on relocation options;
- If the property is dangerous as a result of the fire then the staff member will arrange appropriate security fencing to ensure that no-one is able to access the property;

Sewage Spills

- NCCH will receive notification of the sewerage problem either from the tenant or possibly a neighbour;
- A staff member will attend the property and assess the following:
 - Is the tenant aware that the sewage spill has occurred?
 - How much damage has occurred to the property?
 - Does the tenant require relocation?
 - What is the composition of the family?
 - Is the damage caused as a result of a fault with a sewerage main?
 - What steps and special clean-up will be required to

rectify the problem?

If tenant is unaware of the sewerage spill or require relocation, the staff member will advise the local tenancy team who will then notify the tenant of the spill and/or negotiate with the tenant on relocation options.

If the damage is the result of a blockage in the sewerage main, the local authority or water company is to be contacted immediately.

Clean up of sewerage spills requires specialist cleaning and testing; the staff member must appoint a specialist cleaner to undertake this work as required. NCCH recognises that the quicker the response to cleaning up sewerage spills, the less major damage is likely to be caused.

If the fault is the responsibility of a local authority or water company, but they are not available to commence the cleanup work immediately, the staff member will arrange clean up and any repairs and NCCH will recover costs as appropriate;

The staff member is to obtain documentation from the specialist cleaning company as proof that the property is fit for habitation.

Flooding and Water Damage

NCCH will receive notification of flooding to a property either from the tenant, a tenant of another unit (within complexes), and a neighbour, Police or Fire Service.

The staff member receiving this information will ascertain the degree of damage caused by the flooding and send a representative immediately to assess the following:

- Is the tenant aware that the flooding has occurred?
- How much damage has been caused to the property?
- Does the tenant need to be relocated?
- What is the composition and circumstances of the family?
- Is NCCH aware of the flooding?

If there is minor damage to the property and the tenant is able to remain in the property, then the staff member will identify work needed to bring the property back to NCCH standards and raise an appropriate work order with a contractor.

If the tenant requires relocation, then the staff member will contact the local tenancy team who will then negotiate with the tenant on relocation options.

Fencing

When replacement fencing is requested by a tenant or owner of a neighbouring property, NCCH will carry out an inspection in order to establish the urgency of the request. If work is not considered urgent, it will be deferred to the next planned maintenance cycle for that property.

If NCCH considers repair work to be necessary in the short term, a work order will be raised with a local contractor.

If replacement fencing is required between two properties under NCCH management, quotations will be obtained from appropriate contractors and orders placed as required.

If a fence requiring replacement sits on a boundary between a property in NCCH management and a privately owned property, NCCH will:

- obtain quotations for replacement fencing from appropriate contractors and
- advise owners of neighbouring properties of their responsibilities under the Boundaries Act, which states that each party will pay half the cost of replacement fencing.

Neighbours may choose to seek their own quotations and are required to submit these for NCCH consideration. In all cases, agreement for recovery of half the cost of replacement fencing must be obtained from neighbours by NCCH before the work can be issued.

The Boundaries Act includes provision for action that can be taken where agreement cannot be reached with owners of neighbouring properties and these are to be followed when necessary.

Contractors

The contractor workforce plays a vital role within NCCH by ensuring that properties are maintained to the highest standard possible together with:

- respecting the needs of tenants to feel valued and
- all maintenance work being completed within specified timeframes.

At any one time, NCCH may have in excess of 100 contractors registered for work.

NCCH will recruit contractors based on the need for contractors of particular trades for the specific geographical areas of NCCH operation.

These needs will be assessed regularly by NCCH.

Selection criteria for contractors

The selection criteria for the selection of contractors will be:

Essential Criteria

Each contractor must:

- Have all required licenses and Public Liability insurances in place at all times
- Meet Work Health & Safety legislative and NCCH requirements
- Abide by the NCCH Contractor Code of Conduct

Other Requirements

Each contractor should:

- Be based in the local community (or close to)
- Be equipped to complete required works
- Be reliable (references must be checked prior to using tradespeople)
- Be specialised (where appropriate), e.g. plumbers, electricians, glaziers, locksmiths, tree loppers, etc.
- Be accessible (i.e. should have email, mobile phone and after-hours access)
- Be competitively priced, in line with the estimate of costs used by NCCH to determine a fair price for common works ordered
- Produce high quality work

Sourcing Contractors

NCCH will actively seek contractors to meet requirements.

Contractors can be sourced through the following avenues:

- Contractors will approach NCCH requesting work
- Contractors who are already engaged with us may leave which creates a vacancy that has to be filled
- NCCH staff may identify the need for a new contractor in a particular area and with a particular skill set
- Contractors may be recommended by other contractors or by NCCH staff, subject to ensuring that any Conflict of Interest situations are avoided by staff and such recommendations are in accordance with the NCCH Staff Code of Conduct.

Contractor monitoring & review

NCCH will expect all contractors to continue to meet the selection criteria (and will also expect that contractors continually:

- Produce high quality work;
- Provide value for money;
- Meet the required response times;
- Communicate effectively; and
- Provide excellent service to tenants.

All staff are required to log all feedback about the work of contractors.

Measuring performance

Ongoing expectations of performance will be measured by:

- The NCCH Internal Audit Program;
- Feedback received from tenants and logged on Complispace;
- Conducting telephone surveys with tenants of a randomly selected sample of work orders, comprising at least 10% of all responsive works completed by contractors
- Random direct checking of at least 10% of all responsive works completed by contractors
- Feedback received from NCCH staff, either through telephone contact from tenants or during regular property inspections

Planned Maintenance

Works covered by the NCCH Planned Maintenance program may typically include the following:

- internal or external painting
- full or part replacement of floor coverings
- major window, fencing and other carpentry works
- re-roofing
- replacement of security doors
- upgrades to kitchens or bathrooms
- paths and driveways
- tree removal

- upgrades to common areas of medium-density complexes, including community rooms.

Property assessment survey (PAS)

NCCH completes a property assessment survey (PAS) at each property on a 3 year rolling cycle.

This survey assesses the condition of individual components of each property (e.g. kitchen, bathroom fittings, floor covering, internal and external decoration, roof, external walls, fencing, paths and driveways etc.) and attributes an estimated remaining lifespan to each.

The data is analysed and is used to provide an indication of the overall condition of each property. This information is used to inform the 10 year planned maintenance cycle.

Annual Planned Maintenance Program

An annual planned maintenance program is prepared at the beginning of each financial year.

The following steps are taken to ensure its implementation:

- Each identified property is inspected and a scope of required works is prepared by the PDT
- An implementation plan is developed and is sent to the local tenancy teams for comment and input.
- From the data collected, a final Annual Planned Maintenance program is developed and authorised by the NCCH CEO.

NCCH invites fixed price tenders from a range of suitably qualified contractors for each contract package

Once the successful tender has been selected, NCCH writes to the tenant of each property included in a planned maintenance contract to advise them of the contractor appointed to carry out the work. The letter will include a summary of the work to be completed at the property.

The contractor makes contact with each tenant to discuss the extent of work and agree a mutually convenient start date.

Special tenancy conditions

Special conditions generally include any issues where the completion of the required works will require additional logistics or planning. These situations might include:

- It is known that tenant has a medical condition that might make the completion of some work, e.g. internal painting, problematic.
- The size of the household is such (or the full scope of the works is such) that it is not feasible to complete the works with the family in residence;
- The tenant does not have the capacity to fully understand the nature of the intended works.
- The tenant is an older person, whom may have less tolerance for noise or interruption.

In these situations, a plan will then be jointly developed and implemented to minimize any negative impact on NCCH tenant.

Monitoring and completion of works

NCCH carries out routine inspections of work as it progresses at each property.

Repairs and maintenance

These inspections also check on the contractor's adherence to NCCH's work health and safety requirements.

Once the work is completed, NCCH contacts the tenant to arrange a mutually convenient appointment to carry out a final inspection of the work. At this inspection, NCCH will:

- Complete a new Property Condition Report at the property (Note: The tenant should be provided with a copy of this PCR and a copy of the revised PCR should be placed on the tenant file. NCCH will also photos of the completed works.
- Provide to the tenant a copy of the Planned Maintenance Tenant Feedback Form (Appendix 8)

Audit

Any property where planned maintenance has been carried out may be inspected as part of NCCH's Internal Audit Program to confirm that work has been completed, expenditure is appropriate and that materials and workmanship are to an acceptable standard.

Tenant Feedback

Tenant feedback about the Planned Maintenance will be sought:

- At the completion of the works (see section above); and
- As part of the Annual Tenant Satisfaction Survey conducted by NCCH

INFORMATION	
Title	Repairs and Maintenance
Section	Property and Development
National Regulatory Code Evidence Guideline	Performance Outcome 1: Tenant and Housing Services
National Community Housing Standard	Standard 2.2 Responsive maintenance and repairs
Last review	30 June 2015
Next review	30 June 2016
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NCCH acknowledges the Bundjalung, Arakwal, Gumbaynggir and Yaegl peoples who are the traditional custodians of the land that comprises the Northern Rivers.

