

City of Los Angeles

Tiena Johnson Hall, General Manager
Tricia Keane, Executive Officer

Anna E. Ortega, Assistant General Manager
Luz C. Santiago, Assistant General Manager



Karen Bass, Mayor

LOS ANGELES HOUSING DEPARTMENT
1910 Sunset Blvd, Ste 300
Los Angeles, CA 90026
Tel: 213.808.8808

housing.lacity.gov

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On January 14, 2025, Council File #25-0006-S16 (Hernandez and Soto-Martinez) requested LAHD to recommend how tenants who have been displaced or economically impacted by the recent wildfires attest they have experienced economic or medical hardship to protect them from eviction related to nonpayment of rent.

LAHD recommends the following process for tenants displaced or economically impacted by the recent wildfires during the local emergency. These circumstances include loss of income due to workplace closure, business impact related to the fire, or reasonable expenditures stemming from government-ordered emergency measures.

Similar to the process during required under State legislation during the State of Emergency related to the COVID-19 pandemic, LAHD recommends that tenants who are unable to pay rent due to the recent wildfires declare their eligibility for new protections adopted by the City due to the fire emergency by providing their landlords with a declaration form, as prescribed by LAHD, within 15 days of rent being due and/or after the tenant receives a Notice to Pay Rent or Quit. The declaration will attest under penalty of perjury that the tenant(s) have been economically impacted by the wildfires and is currently unable to pay rent, indicating how they are affected by the wildfire and the total monthly rent amount they cannot pay.

If a landlord seeks to terminate a tenancy for nonpayment of rent which became due during the local emergency, tenants who have submitted a declaration to their landlord can file complaints with LAHD to validate the tenants' economic impact. Upon filing the complaint with LAHD, landlords will immediately receive an informational letter from LAHD detailing this new tenant protection provision and informing the landlord that until an investigation is completed and the landlord is notified of the findings, it will be unlawful for the landlord to pursue an Unlawful Detainer (Summons and Complaint) for non-payment of rent with the Court. This protection from eviction is not a waiver of rent. Tenants must pay back any postponed rent due no later than **one year following the termination of the local emergency**.

In order to implement these new protections, LAHD is seeking authority to execute a sole source contract with Partners in Diversity, a temporary legal services agency. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the City has adopted numerous tenant protections without any staffing resources. On January 7, 2025, the City Council approved the new Just Cause Ordinance (JCO) fee, which extends tenant protections to approximately 400,000 rental units not subject to the Rent Stabilization Ordinance (RSO) and authorizes LAHD to administer the JCO program and hire staff. Unfortunately, the Department has not received managed hiring approval to fill any of the approved 63 positions. Additionally, the staff who investigate violations of the City's Rent Stabilization Ordinance (RSO),

JCO, or any new protections approved by the City Council are in the classification of Housing Investigator (8516-1). The Housing Investigator (HI) classification is utilized exclusively by LAHD and is a challenging classification to fill, unlike the citywide Management Analyst classification. Candidates for HI must have a legal background and professional experience in housing-related investigating complaints, which limits the number of eligible candidates. The existing HI certification list has been exhausted; consequently, LAHD is unable to expeditiously hire the seven (7) approved vacancies. The Personnel Department is working on a new exam that will open later this month. LAHD needs emergency approval to contract or amend an expired contract with Partners in Diversity to hire temporary paralegals in order to assist constituents with the administration and enforcement of existing ordinances and new tenant protection ordinances adopted due to the recent local emergency.