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# New forms will aid tenants with rights

*INDEPENDENCE -- The city of Independence is creating rental violation forms to more clearly outline the rights of tenants and give procedures for how to report complaints.*

Craig Coleman  
April 12, 2011

INDEPENDENCE -- The city of Independence is creating rental violation forms to more clearly outline the rights of tenants and give procedures for how to report complaints.

The initiative was spurred by concerns expressed late last year by the Monmouth-Independence Tenants Union (MITU).

The forms are seen as a way to help renters living within Independence more easily advocate for themselves when it comes to dealing with landlords who are unresponsive to repair requests, group members said.

MITU worked in cooperation with the city of Monmouth to create similar violation forms back in 2002.

The Independence forms will eventually be available, in English and Spanish, on the city's website and at the Independence Civic Center and Independence Public Library.

"We're working to meet their request, we think it's a reasonable one," City Manager David Clyne said. "They'll be useful for tenants and landlords so they understand what their obligations are. Everybody will better understand their rights."

MITU is a renter advocacy group comprised primarily of Western Oregon University students. MITU collected signatures from 165 tenants in the two cities who had complained of leaking roofs, electrical problems, pest infestation and other conditions.

While the city has a formal citation process for code violations, MITU members argued that incidents such as these arise when clear procedures for reporting violations aren't readily available.

"We were shocked at the number and severity of code violations in our community," said Marco Aguirre, MITU member in a press release.

The forms will amount to an easy-to-understand checklist that a renter can fill out and hand into the Independence Police Department to initiate enforcement on non-compliant property owners.

### How It Works

#### Current process for dealing with rental violations:

\* A tenant reports a violation to Independence community service officer. Once the issue is verified, an investigation ensues.

\* The city contacts the landlord asking for compliance.

\* If the problem persists, a citation is issued and court date arranged. A municipal judge can determine a fine amount up to \$1,000.

For more information: 503-838-1212.