

Brockton Housing Authority

Central Office
45 Goddard Road
Brockton, MA 02301
508-588-6880

Admissions & Rental Assistance
1090 Main Street
Brockton, MA 02301
508-427-9000

[www. Brocktonhousingauthority.com](http://www.Brocktonhousingauthority.com)

Welcome!

We at the Brockton Housing Authority wish you happiness in your new home. We are here to help you with any questions or problems you may have. This handbook contains useful information and advice about living here, and should answer many of your questions. Please familiarize yourself with its contents and keep it handy. Additional information can be found on our website, www.Brocktonhousingauthority.com.

Before moving in

Inspect your apartment with your BHA representative and complete the inspection report. If items are not functional or missing, make notes in the report. Sign the report only if all items are as listed – otherwise you could be responsible for damages. You will receive a copy of this report, and one will be filed in your resident file.

Attend the brief **orientation**. Your lease conditions will be explained then. Be sure you understand all of your and BHA's rights and responsibilities thoroughly. You must sign your lease in order to receive the keys to your apartment. Remember, this is a legal agreement, so read it carefully.

Do you receive a check from a public agency? Be sure to inform the agency of your **new address** to avoid delivery interruptions.

Moving in

Rent payments

Rent is due within the first five working days of each month. The most convenient way to pay is by automatic withdrawal from your bank account. You can also pay by check or money order. If your rent is not paid by the 10th of the month we will begin the eviction process. Your rent payment must be mailed in the envelope you receive with your monthly rent bill along with the bottom portion of the bill.

In the event you do not receive your bill on time, please mail your payment to the following address:

**BROCKTON HOUSING AUTHORITY
PO BOX 773
READING, MA 01867-0405**

Please include your name, address and 11-digit account number. If you have any questions regarding your rent, please call your building manager's office.

Keys

We provide you with one apartment key at move-in. We recommend having copies made at a local locksmith for backup. In many buildings, an electronic fob is issued. A fee will be charged for lost or stolen keys or electronic fobs.

In case you are locked out

If you lock yourself out of your apartment and we have to unlock your door after normal work hours, you will be charged a service fee.

Tenant Association

A group of your fellow tenants have organized a Tenant Association to represent your building's tenants. Working together with BHA managers, your association organizes activities and advises us of tenant concerns. For more information, contact your Asset Manager for the name of an association member:

Name _____

Tel. _____

Responsibilities and policies overview

Important numbers

- For most repair and maintenance issues, including repair emergencies, call the BHA Maintenance Department at 508 583-5645 24 hours a day
- For routine problems including rent, transfers or general information, call the BHA central office at 508 588-6880 during normal working hours
- For life-threatening emergencies, call 911

Your general responsibilities

Before you moved in, we cleaned and repaired your apartment and its appliances to ensure that everything was in good working condition. Keeping your new home clean and undamaged is your responsibility. We are responsible for the maintenance and repair of structure, appliances and other equipment due to normal wear and tear. If you, your family members or guests cause damage, whether willfully or accidentally, you will be charged for repairs.

Who may live in your apartment

The size of your apartment was selected to match the needs of your family. Only those listed on your lease are permitted to live in your home. You must notify your Asset Manager if more people than those listed wish to live here or if guests visit for more than three days.

Smoking Policy

There is no smoking in any Brockton Housing Authority building including in your apartment. You must be 25 feet from the building in order to smoke.

Apartment transfers

We understand that things change. Perhaps a family member has moved out, or you have medical conditions or a problem neighbor. For these and other reasons, ask us about transferring to another apartment that better fits your needs.

Subleasing and home businesses not permitted

Subleasing, taking in boarders, or operating a business without permission are in violation of your lease and could be cause for eviction.

Balconies

Keep balconies safe. Balconies are not for storage. Don't hang clothes there or place objects (such as flower pots) near the edges where they could fall off and hurt someone.

Renters insurance

You can protect your investment in furniture and other valuable furnishings by purchasing renter's insurance. Most insurance companies that offer homeowners policies write this coverage that protects you from loss or damage resulting from fire or other risks. Your insurance company can advise you on the right policy. You will not be covered by a BHA insurance policy unless damage is caused by negligence of the BHA or its agents.

Washing machines and dryers

You must get an approval from us before installing any washer that requires a change in plumbing or wiring or installing any clothes dryer. Work must be performed by a licensed professional and must be paid by you. Where community machines are supplied, no private machines are allowed.

Air conditioners

If you want to install an air conditioner, you should first get specifications from the Maintenance Department. The Maintenance Department and/or Asset Manager will instruct you on the installation process. There may be a utility charge per air conditioner.

Cars and parking

Park only in the lot provided and not on lawns or any off-road area. Your guests can park in BHA lots when visiting, provided they do not interfere with the rights of other tenants. No one may park in marked fire lanes – offenders will be towed at the owner's expense. Abandoned, unregistered, or non-operational cars will also be towed at the owner's expense. See your Asset Manager for a copy of the Parking and Towing Policy and to obtain a Parking Sticker.

Apartment maintenance

Do not make any repairs or alterations yourself. Call the BHA maintenance service line 24 hours a day. BHA maintenance personnel will not enter your apartment without your permission (unless there is a valid emergency – the repair person will leave an explanatory note). BHA personnel always carry identification cards. Ask to see this ID before allowing anyone into your home.

Inspections

As stated in your lease, we will inspect your apartment at least once a year during reasonable hours. We inspect for maintenance as well as pest control reasons. We will give you advance notice for routine inspections, but we have the right to enter without notice if we deem that there are threats to health, safety or property.

Pets

See your Asset Manager for a copy of the Pet Policy.

Garbage

All garbage must be contained or wrapped before it is deposited in the trash chutes or dumpsters. You may be charged a maintenance fee if you dispose of garbage improperly. No trash, boxes, furniture, mattresses, etc. are to be left in the hallways. They must be removed from the building and placed in the dumpster areas outside the building.

Controlling pests

Food is the primary reason that rats, cockroaches, ants and other pests invade homes. The key to preventing pests is proper storage of food and disposal of food waste. Use airtight food storage containers when practical and dispose of food waste immediately. If you have a pest problem, notify the Maintenance Department who will arrange extermination services.

Complaints

Submit written, signed complaint forms to your building asset manager. Forms are available at the Asset Manager's office.

Keeping us informed

Your building manager must know your phone number in case of emergency. In many cases, your number is needed for intercom system operation. You must inform your manager if your number changes. Your number is confidential and will not be given out to anyone. You should also notify your Asset Manager if you expect to be away from your apartment for more than a week.

Apartment and yard care and upkeep**Important number**

For most repair and maintenance issues, call the BHA Maintenance Department at 508 583-5645.

Floors

Tile floors benefit from frequent waxing and polishing. Use a water-based liquid wax that comes in a bottle. Do not use paste wax, as this can damage some types of floor tile.

Walls

Use a damp cloth to remove ordinary stains and marks.

Windows and shades

Clean windows by spraying a cleaning solution such as Windex and wiping with a soft cloth. If the supplied window shades are worn past their useful life, the Maintenance Department will replace them for free. However, you will be charged for replacing ripped or destroyed shades. If you wish to install new curtain rods, please obtain permission from your asset manager. You may be charged a fee for any damage caused. Report broken windows immediately to the Maintenance Department.

Hanging pictures and mirrors

Use hook-type picture hangers that mount with a nail and that are designed for the weight of the picture or mirror. Do not use stick-on hangers or plain nails – these can damage the wall. If you damage the wall, you will be charged for repair.

Painting your apartment

Painting your apartment any color other than the original color is prohibited; should you do so you will be charged for the cost of restoring the surface to the original color. The cost for such a restoration could be very expensive. If you would like to paint your apartment with the original colors, the Maintenance Department can usually supply you with free paint. All you need to supply are brushes, rollers and drop cloths.

Counter top care

Counter tops are made of Formica, which can burn and scratch. Do not place pans from the oven or other hot objects directly on the counter. Use a cutting board to cut and chop food. Ordinary marks and stains can be cleaned with a dishrag and cleansing powder such as Ajax.

Screen doors and windows

Broken screens are an all-too-common problem that result in tenants being charged for repairs. Prevention is easy: Never push on screens to open a screen door, and close the door tightly so that it is not damaged by the wind; similarly, never push on screen windows to open them. Residents should take steps to insure that young children are not able to push on screens as they are not safety screens and injury could occur.

Fences

Any fences must be approved by the Asset Manager who also can advise you on permitted designs and installation instructions.

Equipment care and upkeep

Important number

For most repair and maintenance issues, call the BHA Maintenance Department at 508 583-5645.

Conserve Energy

By conserving energy and using appliances and other equipment wisely you can reduce all of our energy bills, giving us more funds for necessary items.

- Turn off all lights, radios and televisions when not in use
- Set thermostats to 68 degrees for days; 62 degrees for nights
- During heating season, open window curtains during the day for free solar heat; close curtains at night to retain heat
- Keep all doors and windows closed when running heat or air conditioning
- Especially during hot summer months when electrical demand is high, try to use washers, dryers, ovens and other energy-intensive appliances during early morning or late evening hours
- Do not remove any water saving devices
- Wash large loads of clothes rather than small loads
- Report leaky faucets and toilets to our Maintenance Department immediately.

Electrical outlets

Never overload outlets. This can trip circuit breakers or even cause a fire.

Stoves

Keeping the burners clean gives more heat at less cost. Clean grids and burners by removing and soaking them in a solution of hot water and detergent or baking soda. Also, if you have a gas stove with a pilot light, make sure the pilot is lit at all times. Clean stove surfaces with a damp cloth and detergent solution. Do not open oven doors or turn on burners for additional heat in your unit. This creates a fire hazard.

Washing machines and dryers

Washing machines must not be overloaded and lint filters on dryers should be cleaned after each use. These rules apply both to community and your own machines. Maintenance is not

responsible for installing tenants own washers and dryers. Dryer vents are to be connected to the supplied dryer vent outlets supplied in the unit.

Plumbing

Some simple practices can avoid costly repairs.

- Do not pour coffee grounds down the sink or toilet
- Install an inexpensive shower drain screen to keep hair from clogging pipes and causing backups
- Toilet paper is the only paper that should be flushed down a toilet – materials such as sanitary napkins, diapers, newspaper and cloth cause blockages and backups
- Keep the toilet seat down when not in use and do not use the toilet tank (or the sink) as a shelf for brushes, bottles, children’s toys and other objects. These simple measures can prevent objects from being accidentally flushed
- For sinks and toilets, a plunger can clear minor blockages. For stubborn blockages, do not use the sink or toilet and immediately call the Maintenance Department

Heating system

You control temperature by setting the wall thermostat. If your apartment is still too hot or cold after setting an appropriate temperature (usually 62 to 68 degrees), call the Maintenance Department.

Television and radio reception

No antenna or dish may be installed without our approval. Any dish or antenna must be within the bounds of your living space and not in any common area. They must be secure, so as not to become a hazard in a storm. They cannot be attached directly to the building or the railings using screws – must be clamps and there can be no penetration of the envelope of the building for the wiring or the attachment of the antenna or dish.

Air conditioners

Setting your air conditioner at 72 degrees will provide comfort and energy efficiency.

Exhaust fans

If your bathroom or kitchen has an exhaust fan, remove the filter (located just below the fan blades) occasionally and clean with a water and detergent solution.

Common areas

Important numbers

For most repair and maintenance issues, call the BHA Maintenance Department at 508-583-5645. For information regarding building use and policies, call your Asset Manager. Write his or her name and number here: _____

Develop community

A little neighborly consideration goes a long way. TV, radio and parties are all fine, but please keep noise levels down. Respecting your neighbors’ right to peace and quiet as well as a neat and clean environment can work wonders. The stairways, elevators and other community areas are also part of your home. We encourage you to get to know your neighbors and work together to develop a sense of community and pride in common areas.

Community center

This room is available for all tenants' use. Ask your Asset Manager or tenant council representative for details.

Elevators

Your building's elevator is kept in safe operating condition. For your safety, do not tamper with the controls and keep the number of riders below or at the number listed inside the car. When moving furniture do not hold the door open for prolonged periods of time as it can cause the elevator to go out of service. Also, please be careful not to scratch or damage the elevator doors or walls.

Stairways, corridors and halls

You and your neighbors share the responsibility of keeping these areas clean and uncluttered.

Utility rooms

These rooms house heating units. It is dangerous to store clothing or any materials here. To avoid fire, do not store anything in a utility room.

Basements

If your apartment building includes a basement, you and your neighbors are responsible for keeping it clean. Do not store any flammable materials here, and store all materials away from any heating units located here. Using basements for bedrooms, living rooms, dens, rec room, etc. are prohibited. They are illegal and against current fire codes.

Trash chutes

Deposit only properly wrapped and tied trash and garbage. Make sure that each bundle of waste is small enough to fit easily in the mouth of the chute. Do not throw boxes or any bulk items down trash chutes. Report any backups immediately to the Maintenance Department.

Clotheslines

Family and garden apartments include clotheslines for your use. Be sure to remove clothes as soon as they are dry so that others can use the line.

Bulletin boards

Check this handy resource frequently for news about activities, services and other news. If you would like to post a notice, get approval from your building manager first.

Balconies

If your apartment has a balcony, it is not to be used for storage; this is against Fire Department regulations. You can put chairs and a table to use this area as a place for relaxation and enjoyment. If a storm is predicted it is best to remove all items from the balcony as high winds could cause them to become airborne and a threat to the safety of others.

Security and elderly concerns**Important numbers**

For help with building security and safety issues, call your building manager. Write his or her name and number here: _____

Voice and TV security system

When someone comes to visit, he or she rings your apartment and communicates with you over our call system – much like a walkie-talkie. He or she is also on camera and visible to you in your apartment. In this way you can identify people before letting them into your home. Inform your friends and relatives of this system. **Never let anyone into the building or your apartment that you do not know and ask all strangers for identification.** We prohibit salespeople and solicitors from entering our buildings (except with written permission) so be especially wary of anyone claiming to be selling anything.

Emergency buzzer system

A buzzer or light outside and above your apartment door can alert neighbors in case of emergency. If you experience a health or other problem, turn on the emergency switch located in your bathroom or bedroom. Your apartment door will unlock and the light or buzzer will stay on until someone comes to your aid. This will not notify any other emergency personnel. For emergency services, call 911.

Bathroom grab bars

Most bathrooms include grab bars to help frail people get in and out of the bathtub. If you feel this bar cannot support the weight of the person using it, contact your building manager.

Lock your door

A locked door often stops burglars – they prefer easier targets and stealth. Do not replace your lock without our consent because we may need to access your apartment for emergencies.

Fire – prevention and evacuation procedure

Important numbers

Brockton Fire Department: 508-583-2323

911 emergency system: 911

Help prevent fires

- Do not go to sleep with an electric heating pad on
- Do not use excessive extension cords to run appliances, as this could cause an electrical fire.
- Shut off appliances when leaving your apartment
- Use extreme care when using electric blankets – follow the manufacturer’s instructions
- Do not wear loose clothing when cooking
- Smother cooking grease flare-ups with a large pan cover and turn off the burner -- leave the burning pan on the stove
- Use metal wastebaskets instead of plastic ones
- Use a flashlight instead of matches or candles

Plan for the unexpected

Become familiar with your building and the locations of all exit stairways and fire alarm boxes. Discuss how you and your family will get out of the building if there is a fire. Here are some practical ideas:

- Count the number of steps it takes to reach each exit stairway – this can help you find the stairway if lights fail or you become engulfed in heavy smoke
- Draw exit routes on a sheet of paper and post it on your refrigerator so everyone has a constant visual reminder
- Set a location outside the building where family members will meet if you must evacuate

Good planning can help you and your family survive.

If there is a fire

Fire in your apartment:

- Call the fire department or dial 911 and tell the operator your apartment building, street address, floor and apartment number
- Leave your apartment immediately and close your door, leaving it unlocked
- Pull the nearest fire alarm box
- Alert your neighbors
- Leave the building and gather with your family at your pre-arranged location

Fire near your apartment:

- Call the fire department or dial 911 and tell the operator your apartment building, street address and floor of the fire
- Touch your apartment door knob to see if it is hot – if it is hot, stay inside because there is fire in the corridor and your apartment is safer than the corridor
- If your door knob is cool, open the door slightly to check for smoke – smoke often kills people before flames
- If there is no significant smoke, exit down a stairway and gather with your family at your pre-arranged location
- If there is fire or heavy smoke in the corridor, stay inside:
 - Seal your unlocked door with wet blankets or towels
 - If your apartment becomes smoky, open any windows that will let in fresh air and lay on the floor, below the smoke
 - If you have a balcony, stay there and close the balcony door
 - Wait for fire or rescue personnel to arrive

Fire in your Building:

- If the Fire Alarm sounds and you do not see fire or smoke, then you should shelter in place until the Fire Department comes to your aid or until the all clear is sounded.

Your eligibility for public housing

Your income must fall under certain limits in order for you to receive housing assistance.

Annual reviews

As required by law, once a year we review your financial status to ensure that you are still eligible for housing assistance.

Interim reviews

We may also review your status in any of these events:

- The number of family member's increases or decreases
- Your income increases or decreases
- Your assets increase or decrease

You must report any changes

Report changes in income, assets or family size immediately. If you don't report on time, you could be back-billed at a higher rent.

Moving out -- what to know and do

Your responsibilities

You must:

- Provide us with 30 days' written notice before you move
- Pay any outstanding rents
- Pay any damage charges (normal wear and tear on appliances and structure is not charged)
- Leave your apartment in clean and good condition and take responsibility for it until you return your key to us
- Leave any trash in boxes inside the front door
- Lock windows and doors
- Park moving vans or other vehicles at the road curb to load your belongings – do not drive over the curb or the lawn

If you leave personal property behind

If you leave any clothing, equipment or other items in the apartment after you turn in your key, we assume that the items are abandoned and such items will be thrown away. Your account may be assessed a maintenance charge for removal of personal property left behind.

Best of luck to you

We wish continued success to all good neighbors who are moving ahead in their jobs and lives.

Grievances – knowing your rights

As a BHA tenant you have certain rights, including the right to bring a problem to us and to receive an impartial hearing and resolution of your problem.

Who can bring a grievance?

Any BHA tenant who believes his or her rights, duties, welfare or status have been adversely affected by BHA action or failure to act can have a grievance heard.

What is a valid grievance?

Any dispute with respect to BHA action or failure to act in accordance with lease requirements or any BHA action or failure to act involving interpretation or application of BHA regulations, policies or procedure which affects a tenant's rights, duties, welfare or status.

What is not a valid grievance?

The BHA grievance procedure is not for resolving disputes between tenants, disputes that do not directly involve us, or class-action grievances. Also this procedure is not for advocating or negotiating BHA policy changes.

Who maintains records of grievances?

The Secretary of the BHA Grievance Panel keeps all records and correspondence.

Step 1: Filing a complaint

No one wants to go through a formal procedure that might be resolved through informal discussion. We prefer to discuss the matter and only move to a hearing if discussion fails to resolve the problem. In either case, you first must file a complaint form with your building manager within 10 working days from the time you feel we violated your rights. You can state your grievance and your requested action on this form.

- File your written complaint with the building manager
- You will get a written response within 10 working days of filing that will tell you the reasons for BHA actions
- If you are dissatisfied with our response, first discuss the problem with your building manager
- If, after informal discussion, you are still dissatisfied, you can submit a request for a formal grievance hearing

Step 2: Requesting a grievance hearing

- Submit a written request for a grievance hearing to the Secretary of the Grievance Panel within 10 working days of receiving our response to your written complaint – if you don't submit your request in this time, you forfeit your right to a hearing
- The Hearing Panel will schedule your hearing within 14 working days of your request or as soon as reasonably practical

Step 3: Grievance procedure

- You can go before the BHA's Grievance Panel to explain your problem in more detail
- If your complaint is related to rent, you must deposit one month's rent into an escrow account and you must continue depositing this amount on a monthly basis until the Grievance Panel reaches a decision. This requirement may be waived in special circumstances. If you fail to make these deposits, we will terminate your grievance subject to legal requirements
- The decision of the Grievance Panel is your final course of action within the BHA organization – if you're still dissatisfied you can move to legal action

Step 4: Legal action

- It is your right to contest our decision in a court of law, in which case you would be responsible for any legal costs such as hiring an attorney