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Cockroach problem bugs tenant, landlord usually not responsible

By Shelley Stall
Student Legal Services Lawyer

Question: My apartment is overrun by cockroaches. They are everywhere. They eat more food than my cat. I have phoned the landlord three or four times asking him to do something about them, but he never does. Is it legal to hire an exterminator and deduct the cost from my rent? **Signed, B. B.**

Answer: Dear B. B.: Probably not. Nebraska law only allows a tenant to "repair and deduct" when the landlord fails to provide essential services such as heat, water or hot water after written notice.

violation, it will contact your landlord, inform him of the violation and give him 30 days to hire a professional exterminator to take care of the problem. The HCO will come back later to see if the landlord has complied. If the landlord fails to comply after two visits, the HCO can revoke the landlord's license to rent and turn the case over to the city attorney's office for prosecution.

the Dean of Students Office, your friend will receive a letter asking her to set up an appointment with the dean's office. The letter will contain the nature of the accusation and a statement of the student's rights including the right to remain silent and the right to have an attorney present at any meeting or hearing relating to the matter.

If the problem persists, you may be able to terminate your lease, if you have one. Section 76-1419(a) of the Nebraska Landlord-Tenant Code requires the landlord to comply with the requirements of the Minimum Housing Code which "materially affect health and safety." If your roach problem is severe enough, this law allows you to give your landlord written notice that the problem must be remedied within 14 days or you will move out within 30 days.

At the dean's office meeting, the student will be told who is accusing her of cheating and what evidence the accusation is based on. If your friend has an explanation for the incident, this is her opportunity to tell her side of the story. The dean's office will investigate her explanation. Sometimes students are exonerated through this process and the accusation is dropped.

Ask Your Attorney

If you live in a single-family dwelling unit or your apartment is the only one in the building infested, you are responsible for the extermination of insects according to the Minimum Housing Code, Section 21.36.060. If you live in a multiple apartment building and at least two apartments in the building are infested with roaches, it is the landlord's responsibility to keep the apartments in a "reasonably insect-proof condition."

Question: I have a friend who has been accused of using a crib sheet (cheat notes) in an exam. She is upset and worried about being kicked out of school. How does the university handle something like this and what can I do to help my friend? **Signed, S. B.**

If your friend is not cleared of the cheating charge, two things can occur. It is possible that the case can be settled by an administrative disposition which may result in a warning or the student being placed on probation. This usually only happens in cases where it is the student's first incident of cheating and the facts of the case convince the dean's office that mitigating circumstances exist and the student is not likely to do it again.

Answer: Dear S. B.: The instructor of the class has considerable discretion in matters of academic dishonesty. If the instructor hasn't done so already, he or she probably will meet with your friend to discuss the alleged cheating incident.

If your friend's case doesn't fit this description, it might be referred to the judicial board. Only the judicial board, made up of five students and four faculty, has the power to suspend or expel a student.

If the landlord is responsible for extermination in your case, I suggest you do two things if you want to stay in this apartment. First, put your complaint in writing. Describe the problem in detail and mention the previous phone calls that didn't get results. Ask your landlord to contact you regarding the problem within one week and let you know what action he plans to take.

The instructor can choose to resolve the matter in various ways ranging from allowing the student to retake an exam or write a paper, to failing the student in the course and turning the matter over to the Dean of Students Office. If the cheating incident affects your friend's grade in the class and she denies cheating, she can appeal the grade through the grade appeal process. She can present her case and have an attorney present to advise her if she wishes.

A judicial board decision can be appealed to a higher board. In some cases on other campuses, lawsuits have been filed when students have been expelled for cheating. Except in cases where students' basic due process rights have been violated, the courts tend to uphold the school's handling of academic dishonesty cases.

Next, call the Housing Code Office and ask an employee to investigate your roach problem. Someone will come out and investigate and write a report. If the HCO finds a Housing Code

If the instructor chooses to involve

If you have a legal problem or question for this column, send a letter to Ask Your Attorney, c/o Shelley Stall, Student Legal Services, Nebraska Union 335.

Series aids foreign students Job-hunting seminars begin today

A series of three job-hunting seminars for foreign students begins today at 3 p.m. in the Nebraska Union. The seminar will be presented by UNL's International Educational Services and Career Planning and Placement.

Students will form rough drafts which Phaneuf will review and give advice about. He said students will have a final, usable version by the end of the seminars.

foreign students and American students.

Today's seminar on resume and introduction letter writing will teach students the basic format, context and style of writing employees expect to see. Garry Phaneuf, director of UNL's Career Planning and Placement Cen-

The emphasis of the series, Phaneuf said, is to teach foreign students how to approach American employees and hunt for jobs effectively. Judy Wendorff, program coordinator for International Educational Services, said there is little difference between job hunting for

"The expectations are the same for both," Wendorff said, but foreign students may not know what is appropriate for job hunting in the United States. The seminars will cover the fundamentals all students need to know, Wendell said. Specifics such as when to be assertive, when to apply for jobs and what employers expect will be addressed, Wendell said.

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The next seminar, on Feb. 28, will feature job hunting skills, and the March 14 seminar will cover interviewing skills.

Wendorff said she hopes about 15 to 20 of UNL's 1,000 foreign students will attend the seminar.

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