

Do You Know Who Your Residents Are? Tips on Criminal Screening

By Mike Lapsley, President and CEO of RentGrow, Inc

While the subject of "criminal screening" may sound cold or even offensive to some applicants, it's important to remember this: whether property owner or resident, we all want safe and peaceful places to live. In the multi-family industry, criminal screening has become one of the most important components in accomplishing this goal. Criminal screening protects your residents and your property. It's a key marketing point to let applicants know that they'll be living in a safe environment. And, in some cases, you may need to conduct criminal screening to comply with state and federal regulations.

However, this sort of screening--unlike credit checks--is still in its infancy. So how do you know if your criminal screening policy is effective, yet fair and consistent? Consider the following tips:

1. Carefully define your criminal criteria. Determine what offenses are unacceptable. For example, you may identify specific types of misdemeanors, such as those that are violent towards people, or felony convictions within the last 5-10 years.

2. Educate yourself on discrimination laws. Remember, look only at the records. Don't make assumptions based on things like a name or a personal characteristic that someone may or may not be a criminal. Consistency protects you, so treat all applicants equally. For example, you can't reject someone based on a criminal screening if you're not screening everyone. Make sure your policies are documented and that they fall within any federal, state, or county guidelines. (This website is a great resource: <http://www.hud.gov/offices/fheo/FHLaws/index.cfm>)

3. Verify that you have the right applicant. You should always verify the applicant's identity before you even begin the process of criminal screening (or credit checks). For example, say your applicant's name is Chris Smith. While your applicant might be female, the record that comes up might be for a male. Methods for verifying an applicant's identity include checking government-issued IDs, such as drivers' licenses, social security cards, or passports. Cross checking can also be valuable. It is important to be able to cross check references before you even see the records at your request as well as do an address search so you can learn about their identity instantly.

4. Streamline the criminal screening process through a third party, such as RentGrow. Set specifications with your screening partner to filter results based on your specific criteria. This helps take the burden off your leasing agents and lets them focus on the job they do best--attracting residents.

5. Look beyond the data. Choose a screening partner who can help you interpret results and whose service provides a recommendation to accept or decline the applicant.

6. Keep in mind that for affordable properties, certain rules exist for resident selection:

- Owners must develop and make public written selection policies.
- The plan must include any preferences in the admission of residents.
- The restriction or preference must cite the supporting documents to ensure nondiscrimination.


7. If you handle the criminal screening process in-house, use consistent staffing and follow consistent procedures:

- Limit access to staff who have been fully trained in order to eliminate inconsistencies.
- Provide written, step-by-step instructions for staff to ensure consistency.
- Use standard forms so that each applicant is subject to the same practices and will receive the same consideration.
- Use objective criteria.
- Follow a formal written process for collecting information. Owners should be careful about informal information "gossip" about an applicant. Such information is discriminatory and will affect applicants inconsistently, since the owner does not collect this for all applicants.

Remember, information collected from the criminal screening process enables property owners to make informed and objective decisions. An effective screening policy will also ensure fair, consistent, and equal treatment of applicants. Last, but certainly not least, criminal screening will help create a safe place for residents to live--and peace of mind for you.

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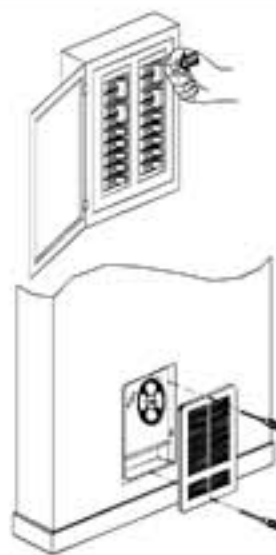




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Cleaning and maintenance guide for W-series heater

Regular maintenance on your electric wall heater will prolong the heater's life and keep it operating safely. W-Series heaters should be cleaned and inspected every 6 months. Heaters that are not cleaned regularly can become clogged with foreign matter causing the heater to produce excessively high discharge temperatures. A combustible object placed too close to a heater in this condition could ignite, starting a fire. We recommend that combustible materials always be kept at least 3 feet away from the front of the heater and 1 foot from the sides. This guide will show you in detail how to properly clean and maintain your King electric wall heater. It will also show you when the heater interior should be replaced. Listed below are step by step instructions for cleaning and maintaining the W-Series wall heater. If you do not feel confident performing the tasks listed in this manual, please contact a professional electrician or qualified repair person to do it for you.

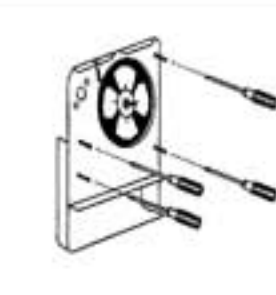


WARNING Take extreme caution when working with electrical heaters. Turn off the electrical power to the heater by switching off the circuit breaker or fuse feeding the heater before removing the grill. Lock, tape or tag the circuit breaker so that the power cannot be turned on accidentally while working on the heater.


After the power is turned off, remove grill using a #2 square drive or a #2 phillips head screw driver. Clean grill by vacuuming or wiping off before reinstalling.



Remove the heater interior from the wall can. To do this:
1) Unfasten the screw at the top of the wall can as shown.
2) Tip the interior forward to expose the power supply connection wires.
3) Disconnect the power wires, making sure you mark them so you can reconnect them exactly the same way, if wires become crossed they could short causing damage. The interior should pull out easily after the mounting screw and electrical connections are removed.



Use a square drive or phillips to remove the four screws that hold the interior cover. Once removed, you have access to the heating element.



Vacuum out any foreign material that is in the chamber between the fan and heating element by using a vacuum as shown. Use a soft bristled brush, such as a paint brush, to loosen any contaminants that may be stuck to the interior surfaces. Never use water or chemical solvents to remove contaminants. Also, spin the fan by hand to make sure that it spins freely. If it feels like the motor is binding, see the instructions below for oiling the motor. Be careful not to bend the fan blade because it can become out of balance if deformed. The fan can be removed to gain more access by using a 3/32" allen wrench. If done, replace the fan in the same position on the shaft as before.

The useful life for the W-series heater depends on the amount of use, environment, and how often it is cleaned and maintained, generally they will last for 8 to 10 years. Heaters operated beyond their useful life are more prone to safety problems. For example, if a motor slows down due to wear or lack of cleaning it reduces the airflow, which can cause the safety limit to trip due to excessively high temperatures. The limit will cycle the heater on and off and eventually fail. For safety reasons, it is important to clean or replace a cycling heater as soon as possible. Heaters produced after 1992 have an indicating light which will turn on when the limit trips and then turns off after the heater cools down. If you see this light coming on, discontinue use of the heater and inspect it immediately. Heaters prior to 1992 do not have the indicating light. When the limit trips it makes an audible click, so by listening close to the heater on older models you can determine if it is cycling. Heaters manufactured in 2001 were equipped with the **SMART GUARD** high temperature limit system which does not utilize the warning light lens. Also, look at the grill to see if it has discolored from high temperatures. In either case, if you suspect that your heater is not functioning properly, discontinue use and follow the guidelines mentioned in this manual or call a qualified electrician. As mentioned before, always keep combustible materials at least three feet away from the front of the heater and one foot from the sides. With regular inspection and maintenance of your electric heaters they will operate safely and efficiently.

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