

Why re-key before the tenant moves in?

**Crown's policy is to have every property re-keyed
before the new tenant takes possession.**

After you read this, we think you will agree that this is a good policy.

After managing rentals for 28 years we are more sensitive than others about “reducing risks for our owners.” Re-keying the property, before turning it over to a tenant, is a big step in reducing your exposure to litigation.

Why re-key?

1. Safety ... reduces the risk of lawsuits

Most homeowners have several keys to their house in circulation. Relatives are often given keys, as are neighbors, cleaning crews, contractors, pest control companies, and real estate agents. If you think about it, there are probably more keys in circulation than you would like to admit. There are probably keys hidden around your house under bricks, over door casings. The problem is, we forget where we have hidden them and hide another.

Can you imagine renting your home and having a relative or neighbor let themselves in a month after your tenant moves in? We had this happen in 1992. A relative unlocked the door and walked in on a tenant, eating a bowl of popcorn, watching TV, in his boxer shorts. What a surprise! **Think of the lawsuit potential.** In this “lawsuit happy society”, a tenant will find reasons to sue you for not protecting their right of privacy, and giving them a safe place to live. **Locking everybody out significantly reduces the chances of a break-in and subsequent lawsuit.**

2. Access ... usable locks with keys

Many homes have locks that have not worked for years. Owners tolerate not having a key to a door lock, if the deadbolt works, or vice versa. Some Owners use one door to access the property and can't find the keys to the other doors. We hear **“I have lived without a key to that door for years, why can't the tenant?”**

Renting a property, with locks on the doors, implies that “the locks work”. If they do not, and a burglar gets in, the tenant will sue you for failure to provide “usable locks” with keys. Renting a property raises the requirements to provide the safety of working door and window locks. What you “lived with” as the owner is not the standard for renting to another person. **What you tolerated as an owner is different than what you must provide as a landlord.**

3. Convenience... fewer keys

Many homes have multiple door locks (and deadbolts) that have been added over a period of years, and have different keys. It is common to receive from three to six keys to a home when we take over management. **When we re-key it, the locksmith re-keys everything to one key, making it convenient for everyone.**

4. Limiting Owner Access

Some Owners do not understand that when they rent their home, they have transferred “right of possession,” and are promising, “quiet enjoyment” to another. We have had owners actually enter properties when tenants were in possession and cause major problems. **Re-keying the locks helps protect owners from themselves and offers the tenant the same peace of mind that you want in your private residence.**

What about the cost? Tenants pay \$100 towards the cost of re-keying properties managed by Crown. The total cost of re-keying the property depends on how many locks there are, how many entry doors, and how many deadbolts. Large homes, with six entry doors and multi-deadbolts cost more to re-key. \$100 from the tenant goes a long way toward covering this expense. Owners pay the balance of the charge. This is a small price to pay for the reduced liability that “unlawful entry” can bring.

For managed properties only, the expense of re-keying will show up on your first monthly statement. The portion paid by your tenant will show up as “re-keying income”.

**We try hard to protect both owners and tenants from potential lawsuits.
Sharing the cost of re-keying is a reasonable and smart policy.**