

Tips to Help Multifamily Property Owners/Managers Cut Utility Costs Amid COVID-19

Across the U.S., the multifamily rental market has taken a significant hit from the financial implications of COVID-19.

As tenants cope with job losses and salary reductions due to the overall economic effects of the pandemic, many are either scrambling to pay rent or just flat out can't pay their rent, and depending on where they live, may not be required by law to pay rent.

During this challenging time, owners and managers of rental properties must find ways to not only work with their tenants, but also to cut unnecessary costs to support the functionality of their properties.

One of the most effective ways for owners and managers to save money during these difficult times is upgrading the energy efficiency of their buildings. Prior to COVID-19, energy efficiency had become a growing demand within the rental market, as tenants began to seek cost-effective, sustainable units within buildings.

However now, by implementing these upgrades, owners and managers can do more than just elevate their properties and stand out in a crowded marketplace—they can lower their own costs without breaking the bank.



According to the National Multifamily Housing Council, more than half of multifamily construction projects have been halted or at least delayed since the beginning of the pandemic. That being said, most energy-efficiency upgrades do not require enlisting an external construction agency.

National Grid has identified several cost-cutting upgrades that only take a few minutes and minimal home-improvement knowledge to complete, while they also save owners and managers hundreds of dollars in the long run. Here are just a few of the many ways owners and managers can lessen the financial strain of utilities not only on their tenants, but also on themselves:

- **Switch to energy-efficient lightbulbs.** They use about 25 to 80 percent less energy than traditional bulbs and last consumers three to 25 times longer.
- **Replace showerheads with low-flow models.** Prior to COVID-19, 70 percent of owners and managers were planning to make these upgrades within a year.



- **Check your apartments' windows.** If you don't have the money or ability to install newer, more efficient windows, installing shades allows more control of the indoor temperature to save money on air conditioning.
- **Look around your apartments for any air or water leaks.** These leaks can be easily fixed and will save you a lot of money on wasted energy.
- **Most importantly, talk to your tenants.** An open relationship between a tenant and owner/manager enables clear goals in addition to building-specific tips to keep energy bills low.

Developing a Collaborative Relationship with Tenants

With these tips in mind, energy-efficiency upgrades do not only need to be a one-sided effort. By working with tenants and respecting the complexity of the current financial situation both parties are experiencing, partnerships between owners/managers and tenants can enable cost benefits for all involved.

Even with social distancing regulations in place, collaborative relationships between owners/managers and tenants can come in many different forms. Especially in these times of uncertainty, surveying tenants enables owners/managers to find out what upgrades tenants want, whether looking at specific projects or overall benefits.

While in-person meetings between tenants and owners and managers may be impossible for the time being, Owners and managers should send regular communications to tenants that range from energy-efficiency tips to newsletters highlighting upgrades and personal efficiency checklists that tenants can complete while they are spending extra time at home.

Energy-efficiency does not require a high-cost effort by only one party in a landlord-tenant relationship. By working together, listening to tenant desires, and taking note of what is going on in the world, owners and managers have the opportunity to elevate their properties quickly while saving a lot of money on utility bills.

In this time of uncertainty and struggle, businesses must adapt to this new normal and seek new ways to save money for themselves and their consumers. Energy efficiency is the perfect example of a low-cost, high-yield improvement that allows for cost savings and sustainable development during these difficult times.

Learn more at ngrid.com/multifamily.

