

The Keys to Addressing Resident Privacy and Security Concerns

Resident privacy and security are more important than ever. Virginia's new Consumer Data Protection Act went into effect on January 1, 2023, and according to a Gallup survey, 53% of Americans worry a "great deal" about crime. As a multifamily property manager or owner, what can you do to put residents' minds at ease?

Treat Sensitive Data with Care

From the moment a prospect submits a rental application, you have access to their sensitive information, such as Social Security numbers, credit history and pay stubs. After they move in, you also have keys to their mailboxes, which can contain similar sensitive documents.

It's essential to consult with legal counsel and follow best practices for meeting data privacy requirements. You should also secure keys to mailboxes and other areas that contain residents' personal information. When someone accesses a key, make sure you have a verifiable record of who removed it and why. This ensures that residents feel secure knowing their sensitive data is safe.

Be Smart About Technology

Smart technology is becoming more common, but it's important to consider factors such as ease of use, cost and security. Additionally, make sure you understand residents' preferences and concerns.

While some residents find value in smart tech, others aren't willing to sacrifice their privacy. In New York, a group of apartment residents successfully sued their landlords for the right to use physical keys instead of the building's smart locks due to privacy

concerns about the app tracking their location data.

In a survey by KeyTrak called "Smart Locks vs. Metal Keys," the data revealed that ages 18-34 were the most likely to want smart locks, but ages 45 and up preferred traditional keys. If your community is geared toward college students or young professionals, smart locks could be a good fit for your property. However, if you have a lot of older residents, they might prefer metal keys. For a mixed demographic, consider a hybrid approach.

Regardless of what technology you use, clearly communicate with residents about how the technology works and how you're protecting their privacy.

Maintain Accurate Access Records

Apartment residents want to maintain a sense of personal space and feel secure where they live. In fact, an Allegion survey reveals that almost three in four millennials plan to live in apartments long term, and their top priorities are safety and security.

A big part of helping residents feel safe is holding your staff accountable for when and why they can access units. If an

employee enters an apartment without permission or proper notice, the resident who lives there will feel like their sense of privacy has been violated.

Having a clear key control policy and keeping accurate key activity records will discourage employees from entering apartments without authorization. In addition, using an electronic key control system that automatically notifies residents when the key to their unit has been removed increases transparency and prevents unwelcome surprises.

Conclusion

To protect residents' privacy and help them feel safe, it's important to adhere to data privacy requirements and implement technology strategically. Understanding your property's demographics and tailoring security measures accordingly, whether through smart locks or traditional keys, is vital to meeting diverse resident needs. However, regardless of the technology you use, be transparent about privacy measures, maintain accurate key control records and foster a culture of accountability. By doing so, you'll demonstrate that you respect residents' privacy and give them peace of mind.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Carl Hanly is a regional manager with KeyTrak, where he helps multifamily clients minimize risks associated with managing resident keys. He has a Certified Apartment Supplier accreditation from the National Apartment Association, has completed NAA's Leadership Lyceum training and is actively involved with the NAA National Supplier Council.