

# PRESENTS FROM TENANTS

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## Solutions for Abandoned Furniture and Other Stray Items

Most of the property managers and apartment owners I've met over the years have come across a couch, mattress, or some other stray piece of furniture left next to the dumpster for their building. When this happens, property managers or landlords have little or no recourse because they don't know who left the furniture, and if they do, the tenant has probably skipped town. What's a landlord or homeowner to do?

### 1. Ignore the problem

This is a terrible idea. Items left next to a dumpster produce a lemming effect. Once one person has left their junk and split, others will think they are entitled to do the same. The key is to get rid of the item as soon as possible to prevent other stray items from showing up in the same place.

### 2. Put the item in a storage room or boiler room

This is a better idea, but it still doesn't solve the problem. Word will spread that the building's management will tolerate such behavior and the problem, as with ff 1, will only become more entrenched. Furthermore, the landlord will eventually have to clean out the storage area, which won't be much fun. Finally, abandoned items stored in a boiler room, or electrical room could violate the fire safety code, which, in turn, could lead to fines or insurance-related problems.

### 3. Contract service

There are plenty of junk hauling services that will come by on a moments notice to pick up abandoned items. These companies can nip the problem in the bud, preventing copycat behaviour and a more widespread problem. However, junk removal companies cannot prevent the problem from starting in the first place.

### 4. Well lit and protected garbage area

The best overall solution is to keep garbage and recycling containers inside the building. If this isn't possible, it's important to have a well-lit and regularly patrolled garbage area. People will be less likely to leave their junk in an area that is bright and supervised throughout the week.

## 5. Tenant agreements

Cure the problem at its source. No one intentionally rents to problem tenants, but it's important to tell tenants up front that they are responsible for removing all their stuff when they leave, including junk. If not, they will be charged for the removal of the items they leave behind. Also note that most private haulers are happy to provide landlords and property managers with discount cards for tenants.

### What To Do With Potentially Dangerous Items?

An abandoned couch, though a frustrating find, isn't a dangerous item that must be discarded in a particularly careful manner. However, many items that are left in common areas, like underground parking lots and dumpsters, are dangerous and difficult to know what to do with. 1. Drywall - Do not throw drywall out in the regular rubbish. It does not decompose properly, which is probably the reason your renovator left it behind in the first place! You can take drywall to a local transfer station for a fee or call Trashbusters to pick it up. 2. Batteries - Call 1-800-8-battery for more information about recycling batteries. You can drop off rechargeable batteries at several stores, including Canadian Tire, Future Shop and MEC. They accept nickel cadmium, nickel metal hydride, Lithium ion and small sealed lead batteries. 3. Paint - Vancouver-based Productcare.org accepts a wide range of paint products, including, interior and exterior latex, alkyd, enamel and oil-based consumer paints, porch, floor and deck paints, interior and exterior varnishes and urethanes and marine enamels.

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