



## Substandard Housing and Rental Safety

Substandard housing, such as apartment complexes with exposed electric wire, dry rot, mold and collapsed floors, is a problem for those seeking affordable rental housing. It can also cause dire health problems for occupants. The City of Sacramento has had a rental inspection program since 2008 to address these issues, but it's not a universal program in California.

On Insight, we talked about rental safety and what residents can do to make sure their needs are met. Our guests include a former director of the Sacramento Development Department, Max Fernandez, who oversaw the implementation of the rental inspection program here. He now sits on the board of Mutual Housing California, a nonprofit affordable housing developer that has rebuilt or renovated seven properties in the area that were deemed unsafe. We also talked with Rachel Iskow, chief executive officer of Mutual Housing.

The tour of Mutual Housing at Spring Lake highlights the organization's commitment to sustainable building. Iskow recalls an inspection she conducted before the City's Rental Housing Inspection ordinance.

"It was nap time, and little toddlers were sleeping next to exposed wiring... holes in ceilings that would obviously leak in the winter... it was so disturbing it brought me to tears really," says Iskow.

Mutual Housing was able to take over that property but weren't able to renovate the complex. Instead, it was rebuilt.

"We just don't want to see that scarce money being used to rebuild housing that should have been taken care of by their landlords in the first place," Iskow says.

That's why Mutual Housing worked with the city to get a Rental Housing Inspection ordinance. The ordinance went into effect in 2008 and at the time, 69 percent of properties inspected were in violation. Some had multiple violations.

Within the first five years of the ordinance, landlords started cleaning up properties before the inspections.

"The city of Sacramento's policy has made housing so much safer and healthier for any vulnerable populations," says Iskow.

The plan was to be able to proactively inspect these rental units, so they don't have to be demolished and rebuilt, and so tenants aren't living in substandard situations.

Now Sacramento's Rental Inspection program is being held up as a model for other communities.

To ask for a rental inspection, contact 311.

To hear the full interview visit:  
<https://soundcloud.com/mutual-housing-california>.