



# The BULLETIN

Quarterly news about Section 8 in Seattle • DECEMBER 2005 • For landlords and service providers

**1** Seattle Housing urges landlords to offer vacant units to hurricane victims

**2** Section 8 utility allowances affect tenants' housing costs

**3** New utility allowances in effect; one family survives two hurricanes

**4** Meet new owner liaison; upcoming workshops

## Introduction from the new director



Dear housing provider,

It is my pleasure to introduce myself to you. I have recently joined Seattle Housing Authority as Director of Housing Advocacy and Rental Assistance. But first, I would like to thank Barbara Strayer for her leadership as interim Director of Rental Assistance programs.

In my previous position as King County Director for United States Senator Maria Cantwell, I worked on all issues that impacted King County. A significant portion of my efforts focused on housing, and Section 8 in particular. Prior to working for Senator Cantwell, I designed and managed programs to provide employment opportunities for low-income individuals and training for businesses.

As the new director of the Section 8 program, I expect many opportunities and some challenges looking forward, such as the uncertain future of federal funding. I know that the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program is a vital cornerstone of the ongoing plan to meet the housing needs of our community, and landlords are an important part of that equation.

I look forward to getting to know you and continuing to work with you to build on Seattle Housing Authority's established relationships in the community.

LISA CIPOLLONE,  
DIRECTOR OF ADVOCACY AND  
RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

## Hurricane victims still need housing Deadline for subsidized leases extended

Last week, Seattle Housing Authority sent a letter to landlords with Section 8 tenants requesting that vacant units be made available for families left homeless by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

As you know, the effects of the hurricanes are still being felt throughout the country, including right here in our own backyard. Hundreds of individuals and families have recently relocated to the Seattle area and are in need of housing.

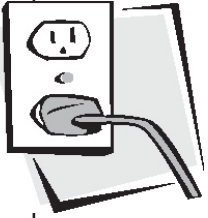
When Hurricane Katrina struck, Seattle Housing made available 60 apartments that did not have a prior waiting list (see *Katrina housing* on page 3). We are currently completing leasing activities for the last of these apartments. Last week, we received 60 more requests for housing at Washington State's housing and services fair for hurricane victims.

However, it is estimated that up to 750 hurricane victims in the area are still in need of housing and over 200 households are living in emergency housing in various hotels in the area. According to FEMA, hotel subsidies will be stopped on December 15.

Though a program funded by FEMA, these evacuated families can receive temporary subsidized housing, similar to a voucher subsidy, through Seattle Authority. Landlords sign a contract with Seattle Housing and are reimbursed 100 percent up to HUD's Fair Market Rent (FMR). Leases are for three months, and extensions may be applied up to August 31, 2006.

As stated in last week's letter, FEMA's original deadline for this program was December 1, 2005. Fortunately, FEMA just announced that housing authorities and evacuees now have until December 15, 2005 to sign contracts and leases with landlords.

Seattle Housing is asking that landlords who have available units collaborate with us to assist these families left homeless by the disasters. If you are able to participate or would like further information, please contact Gerry Nelson, contract coordinator at the PorchLight Housing Center at (206) 239-1531 or [gnelson@seattlehousing.org](mailto:gnelson@seattlehousing.org).



# Many utility allowances lowered

Amounts revised to reflect local rates and consumption

On September 19, the Board of Commissioners approved new utility allowances for the Section 8 program. The new allowance amounts are generally lower than the previous allowances, though some tenants who live in apartments or townhouses may see their allowance increased.

Although the lower allowances mean that many tenants will face increased out-of-pocket costs, they will not be required to pay more than 30 percent of their income. Previously, the higher allowances meant that many tenants were paying less than 30 percent of their income, because their actual costs for utilities were lower. The new allowances are designed to reflect our local costs and conditions as closely as possible.

## What does the change mean for landlords?

Landlords with existing tenants with Section 8 assistance may see a difference in the portions that tenants pay, and Seattle Housing Authority pays. For units with a lower allowance, tenants will pay more towards their rent.

If you have new tenants moving in, you may find that more tenants can afford your unit. Because less of the tenant's housing budget is consumed by the utility allowance, more is available for rent. (See chart, left)

## Why did SHA implement new utility allowances?

Although Seattle Housing is required to review allowances every year, we decided to undertake a more in-depth analysis based on data from our local Puget Sound rates and climate. The previous allowances used a HUD formula that was based on average climate conditions from all over the country.

## *Katrina housing*

### Three states, two hurricanes, one family

Arisha Walker was so anxious to finally get settled, she called Seattle Housing Authority from the train to schedule an appointment.

Arisha and her two toddlers, Ja'Asia and Jarvis, were one of the lucky families to receive one of the 60 apartments that Seattle Housing had available for evacuees. The units were part of our portfolio of non-subsidized buildings geared towards work-force families, and did not have anyone on their waiting lists.

After Hurricane Katrina, the Walkers evacuated New Orleans to Texas with assistance from Red Cross. Then, Hurricane Rita hit and the family had to evacuate again. This time, they could not receive

Seattle Housing's goal was to implement allowances that are as close as possible to actual utility bills that tenants pay. The housing authority contracted with a HUD-approved energy consulting company that specializes in utility allowances, and they produced the new amounts based on local climate conditions and current rates.

Current utility allowance schedules are available at [www.seattlehousing.org](http://www.seattlehousing.org) on the "downloads" page of the "Housing" section.

## When will the new allowance take effect?

The revised utility allowances went into effect October 1, and will be used immediately for all vouchers issued to new participants or to current participants wishing to move. All other households with tenant-paid utilities will see the new allowances used in their rent calculation at their next annual review.



*Ja'Asia, Jarvis and Arisha Walker are happy to finally arrive at PorchLight to apply for evacuee housing.*

emergency housing in a hotel, because they had already received assistance the first time they were evacuated.

Arisha decided to head north because she has a cousin in Seattle.

However, she and her children had to stay in a shelter until their apartment was ready, because her cousin did not have space.

Arisha was thrilled to get finally settled in West Seattle. "I'm really determined to make a new life here," she said. "My first priorities are getting my daughter into preschool and looking for a job."



# News you can use

## Section 8 utility allowances

Amounts affect how much tenants pay for rent

### What is a utility allowance?

A utility allowance is an estimated cost for tenant-paid utilities. It is based on the type of energy the rental unit uses, the number of bedrooms in the unit, and the type of building (e.g., apartment or house). See the sample below for a two-bedroom apartment that has gas heat, gas water heating, and electric appliances (cooking).

Since Seattle Housing does not actually pay a tenant's utility bills, we use the utility allowance as an estimate of how much utilities should cost for the type of unit, the number of bedrooms and the type of energy (see below, left).

During the leasing process, Section 8 staff figures the amount into the household's monthly subsidy and lets the family "keep" the utility allowance amount to pay the utilities.

The actual utility bills may be higher, which means the family would have to pay more out-of-pocket. If the utility bills are lower than the allowance, they keep the extra subsidy.

### How does the utility allowance affect what tenants pay for rent?

Tenants contribute at least 30 percent—but not more than 40 percent—of the family income towards their housing cost, which is rent *and* the utility allowance (see chart below).

If a tenant's utility allowance is lowered, more of the housing budget will be available to pay rent to the landlord.

### Do landlords need to know how to figure out utility allowances?

No, landlords do not need to keep information about utility allowances. Section 8 staff will figure out the utility allowance when a participant wants to rent a particular unit. However, some landlords like to know the allowance amounts for their units, so they'll know whether a prospective tenant on Section 8 can afford to rent from them.

Utility allowances can be downloaded from the Web at [www.seattlehousing.org/housing/downloads](http://www.seattlehousing.org/housing/downloads) or requested from PorchLight.

### Sample utility allowance calculation

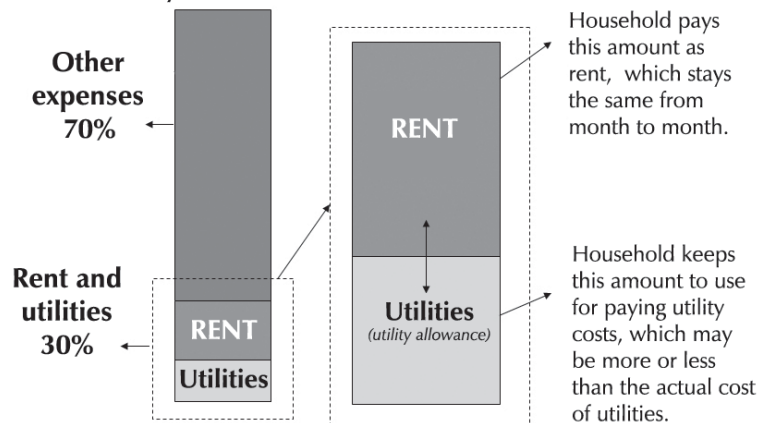
#### Two- bedroom apartment:

Water, sewer garbage are included in the rent; other utilities are paid by the tenant. The utility allowance for this unit is \$86 per month.

Heat (natural gas).....	\$40
Cooking (electric).....	\$2
Electricity.....	\$14
Water heating (natural gas).....	\$21
Natural gas service charge.....	\$6
Electricity service charge.....	\$3
Total.....	\$86

### Rent and utility expenses should be 30 percent of tenants' total monthly income

#### Total monthly income





# Introducing...

## New Owner Liaison Mike Jung

Please welcome our new owner liaison, Mike Jung. Some of you know Mike from his work as a Section 8 case worker over the past three years.

Mike now brings his experience and detailed knowledge of the Section 8 program to helping landlords. You can meet him at any of the upcoming landlord workshops—third Tuesday each month at PorchLight.

If you have any issues or questions, or just need help with the Section 8 process, you can reach Mike at 239-1672 or [mjung@seattlehousing.org](mailto:mjung@seattlehousing.org).

The Section 8 department would also like to thank **Sven Koehler**, who recently left the owner liaison position to work as resident communications liaison with the housing authority's high-rise renovation project, *Homeworks*. Landlords and staff alike appreciated Sven's dedication to customer service, such as initiating the landlord workshop program. Please join us in wishing Sven good luck in his new position.

## Landlord *workshops*

**Every third Tuesday**

**5:30 -7:00 pm**

at PorchLight, 907 NW Ballard Way, Suite 200

### Upcoming dates:

December 20, January 17, February 21

New and seasoned landlords alike are invited to bring questions and issues to the monthly sessions.

Questions? Contact Mike Jung at 206-239-1672 or [mjung@seattlehousing.org](mailto:mjung@seattlehousing.org).



Phone: 206-239-1500 | Fax: 206-239-1770  
E-mail: [porchlight.info@seattlehousing.org](mailto:porchlight.info@seattlehousing.org) | Web: [www.seattlehousing.org](http://www.seattlehousing.org)

### GENERAL QUESTIONS

To speak with a customer service agent about any Section 8-related issue or concern: Call 206-239-1728 and press 0.

### TO LIST AVAILABLE UNITS

Call 206-239-1663 or go to [www.seattlehousing.org](http://www.seattlehousing.org) and click on "Section 8 landlords" under the "Housing" menu.

### INTERIM DIRECTOR

Barbara Strayer 206-239-1620

### OWNER LIAISON

Sven Koehler 206-239-1672

### OCCUPANCY SUPERVISORS

Tenant based: 206-239-1636  
Tenant based: 206-239-1619  
Mod. rehab./project-based: 206-239-1649

### NEW MOVE-IN TEAM

Status of tenancy approvals: 206-239-1676  
Report ownership changes: 206-239-1655  
Fax: 206-239-1760

### ISSUANCE TEAM

206-239-1592

### INSPECTIONS

Initial/annual inspections: 206-239-1645  
Re-inspections: 206-239-1576  
Inspections supervisor 206-239-1621

### INSPECTORS

Bruce Brines 206-239-1689  
Bill Francis 206-770-6735  
Paul Gimmi 206-239-1632  
Nancy Jones 206-239-1616  
Sue Nigg 206-239-1639  
Nancy Shutes 206-239-1646  
Jeff Small 206-239-1669  
Lora Wait-Hoy 206-770-6729  
Mike Yost 206-239-1654

## What is PorchLight?

The PorchLight Housing Center is a division of the Seattle Housing Authority, the city's largest provider of low-income and affordable housing. PorchLight manages the Section 8 Program and applications for public housing.

## A focus on service

Located in Seattle's Ballard neighborhood, PorchLight is a place where people seeking housing assistance can learn about and apply for it. We are committed to high quality customer service to clients, participating landlords and our partners in Seattle's affordable housing continuum.

## Want to learn more?

Call 206-239-1500 or visit us at [www.seattlehousing.org](http://www.seattlehousing.org) (click on "Housing," then "PorchLight") or come to our landlord workshops, every third Tuesday of the month at 5:30 pm at PorchLight.

## Did you know...

...that SHA's Impact Property Services provides lead-based paint abatement services? Impact Property Services offers affordable, efficient service for your deteriorated paint problems. We have a high level of expertise from years of experience and respond quickly to service requests. We can provide both EPA certified lead-based paint risk assessors and EPA certified lead-safe workers, including painters and carpenters. Call us today at 206-716-1310, extension 13.

...that you can find support for owners on our Web site? Visit us at [www.seattlehousing.org](http://www.seattlehousing.org) today and click on "Section 8 landlords" for helpful resources and information.

...that the City of Seattle provides free information about property owner rights and city ordinances? Call 206-684-7979 for more information.