
HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF SEATTLE

MANUAL OF OPERATIONS

SUBJECT: Abandoned Personal Property

SCOPE: This policy and procedure shall apply to all housing units owned or managed by the Seattle Housing Authority (SHA), unless specifically noted.

POLICY:

Any personal property left on the premises by the resident after occupancy has been legally terminated by the rules of abandonment, shall be deemed to have been abandoned and subject to disposal by the Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) as provided in this policy.

No SHA employee may take personal possession of any abandoned property under any circumstance, or authorize any other person to take possession of such property except as provided herein.

IMPLEMENTATION POLICY:

A. Abandonment

The unit shall be considered abandoned when:

1. Resident's rent is more than one month past due; and
2. There is substantial reason to believe the resident has vacated, including but not limited to: a statement by the resident that he or she intends to vacate; witnesses observing the resident moving their belongings out of the unit; a report from the resident's family, case manager, or other similar person that the resident has vacated; or the report of a forwarding address from the Postal Service.

B. Abandoned Personal Property

1. Storage
Any abandoned personal property shall be stored for not less than 45 days. Any items that pose a health or safety hazard, such as food, infested or soiled items, contraband, and weapons, will NOT be stored. Weapons will be turned over to the police department.

Storage shall be in a secure location that is safe from theft or weather damage. Storage may be on site or at a commercial storage facility. An inventory of the property shall be made as soon as possible by the Senior Property Manager or his or her designee and signed by at least two persons attesting that the inventory includes all property left in the unit. A copy of the inventory shall be placed in the resident's file. SHA shall not be liable for any damaged, stolen, or missing property.

If no person claims the property, the Senior Property Manager or designee shall dispose of the property by auction or sale. If the property cannot be auctioned or sold, it may be discarded.

Except as provided in this policy, no SHA employee shall salvage, keep, use, give away or otherwise possess or exercise control over any abandoned personal property.

2. Claiming of the property

The resident shall schedule an appointment to claim the property with the Senior Property Manager or Property Manager. Payment of actual storage costs, plus labor costs for the removal of abandoned property from the unit and placement in storage, shall be made before the property will be released.

3. Auction / Sale

Auctions shall be through the Sheriff's office, commercial auctioneers, or other means such as an agency wide sale, consignment or internet sale. For goods such as furniture or automobiles, subject to a sales contract, the Senior Property Manager or designee shall obtain necessary legal authorization needed to proceed with a sale.

Money received from sale by auction shall be applied in the following order:

- (1) To the resident's debit account, if any, including property transportation and storage costs.
- (2) Held for benefit of the former resident for one year from date of sale.
- (3) If no claim is made or action commenced for recovery within the year, any balance shall be credited to miscellaneous project income and deposited in the appropriate account with other receipts.

4. Charitable Organizations

To be eligible to receive donations of abandoned resident's property, charitable organizations must be approved as a charitable organization which uses material donations to support programs and services for low income persons in Seattle.

The charitable organization shall remove the donated items from SHA's premises as quickly as possible. The charitable organization shall provide all labor and shall have the capacity to receive such donations on short notice, i.e., 24 - 48 hours notice. SHA shall not provide temporary storage of donated items for any charitable organization, nor shall a charitable organization store the donated items on SHA property.