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There are many reasons that most property management companies do not perform joint walk-throughs with tenants when they vacate, but rather, do them on their own after the keys have been returned. This article was written to give a little bit of perspective to renters, who may be frustrated by this kind of policy. As a property manager who has done joint walk-throughs with tenants in the past, I do not believe it is the best practice. Joint walk-throughs can create more problems than they help (even for tenants).

1.) Tenants want to walk the property together, so that they can get an idea of what would or would not represent a charge against the security deposit. Unfortunately, when walking the property, there is no way that a property manager can 'guarantee' what will or will not represent a charge against the security deposit. Documentation of the property, pre & post residency must be gathered and reviewed, this process is often a lengthy one. At our company, we are looking at our move-in report with photos, the tenant's move-in report, and our move-out report with photos, it is quite the process. Also, after noting specific damages, if any are present, sometimes we need to discuss how best to handle the situation with our property management team and/or attorneys. Believe it or not, but we don't always have every answer immediately on property deposit accounting when trying to split hairs. There are many unique circumstances which may influence proper accounting, all of which are considered upon our review. When I had previously done move-outs walk-throughs with tenants (many years back), I can't tell you how many times the tenant felt that I "told them" they wouldn't be charged, or that I somehow represented what they would or would not be charged for, and this was after I disclosed before entering the home that I could not tell them anything about what or would not be held against their deposit.

Just to give you some insight, just about EVERY tenant, good or bad, outstanding or awful, will say, "that was like that when I moved in," and "the home looks better now than when I got it." Both statements are rarely accurate. Additionally, after over a decade in this business, I can count the number of tenants that said, "that was me, I caused that damage" on one hand. Pure integrity in this world, is quite rare.

2.) Imagine doing a joint walk through, and that you are pointing out issues to the tenant. In this example, let's say you noted several screw anchor holes and some problems with how clean the tenant left the unit. Well, now the tenant wants you to come back another day to give them more time, or to go room-by-room "resolving" items as you note them – which can drastically extend the time that a move-out report takes. Additionally, the tenant may not have an eye for detail on making proper repairs or for cleaning in a way that is to a "professional standard" (per our lease). Now you get to tell them to their face that they are not gifted in those areas, and that no amount of repair/cleaning is going to satisfy the issue. Try to do this without them yelling at you, or immediately rating your company poorly. Believe it or not, some people simply cannot see it, they become blind or numb to problematic issues, one of my best friends is that way. He believes his condo is reasonably well kept, however it is in fact not well kept (you can't always see the floor). He just can't see it, and I'm sure we all know someone like that.

3.) Imagine being the target of everyone's "affection" daily. As a property manager, we are by design, positioned between the homeowner and the tenant. Commonly, the tenant feels that home owner is just trying to rip them off and keep their deposit, and the owner feels like the tenant is responsible for every minuscule blemish. Imagine that your job is to essentially serve as a mediator, who ultimately represents the home owner – but who also has an obligation and commitment to practice fair and honest business. Close your eyes for a moment, and imagine the challenge of that. You wouldn't want that job.

At Colorado Peak Real Estate, we work VERY hard to help everyone succeed. Our lease spells out quite clearly how the home is to be left, and we also provide a Move-out Cleaning Checklist (which also covers things like touch-up painting) to our tenants. We want to give our tenants back every cent of the security deposit, but we have an obligation to charge should the home not be left in the condition that it should be per the lease contract. Note that there may also be charges if the home was not maintained as described in our Maintenance Addendum, or if problems were left unreported which caused additional damage.

Finally, if you as a tenant ever feel that we mischarged, after vacating, please request a Deposit Dispute Form. Because, believe it or not, we aren't perfect. While we work tirelessly to ensure we serve all clients and customers in way that is error free – we are human. After receipt of a dispute form from you, we are happy to take a second look at the deposit accounting and invoices to ensure no errors were made in the reconciliation.

I hope this article helped to give you a better understanding of our security deposit and move-in/move-out philosophy. Thank you!