

Jan 2009



# Newsletter

New Hampshire  
Self Storage  
Association

2200 Front St  
Manchester, NH  
03102

## **Upcoming Events:**

MeSSA has invited us to their legal seminar in Oct 2009. See article for info.

## **Announcements:**

Special thanks to everyone who worked so very hard to bring together our holiday party in December. It was a joyful event and everyone had a great time.

For newsletter comments, questions or suggestions, contact the editor, Lisa DeLeon, at [MeredithSelfStorage@Verizon.net](mailto:MeredithSelfStorage@Verizon.net)

## **Taking the headaches out of collections**

As a rental property, your primary interest is making a profit. This is accomplished by collecting more money in rent than you pay out in expenses. Generally, if you end up with a positive cash flow after all of your liabilities, you are doing well.

The key to making a profit is to collect all of the rent in a timely manner. For some, this is not a problem, but for others, it is their biggest nightmare. There are a variety of reasons why this can be difficult. Some include tenants just don't like to pay, some tenants always have an argument or excuse and some tenants will falsely claim that your unit are not being maintained well.

These situations and innumerable others can be very difficult to deal with, but should not stop you from your primary objective, to collect the rent. While every situation is different, there are several things you can do to limit collection roadblocks.

Start by make rent payment a habit from day one by requiring rent prior to occupancy. When tenants first move in make sure you have gone over the amounts and dates that the rent is due when you discuss the lease terms. One of the worst things you can do is to give them leeway in paying the first month's rent late or incompletely. What you are essentially saying that it is ok to pay the rent late because they have a financial issue so the next time they have a problem, they expect that you will be equally as understanding.

Don't confuse this with giving a discount to seal a sale. There is a distinct difference between offering a promotional rate to a new tenant and setting a precedent that rent is flexible.

Try to be ahead of the game. Before the rent is due, give your tenants a reminder that the rent is about to become due so they can plan for it. Many companies choose to use emailed invoices which serve this basic purpose with little minimal effort or cost.

Be sure to, have and clearly explain a policy on expected rent payment and applicable fees for tardiness.

This should be outlined in your lease in addition to being reviewed with your tenants during the move in process. Never assume that your tenants will know what to do with your rent or you will have no-one to blame but yourself when you are chasing it down.

All of the important rental facts need to be outlined during the review, including but not limited to:

- How much is due and when.
- What the penalties are if the payment is made late, and how they will be collected.
- What time period does the payment represent.
- Who a check should be addressed to and where to send it.
- What to do if the payment can't be made.
- What happens if a check is returned for insufficient funds.

Try to make things as simple for your tenants as possible. Let tenants know if cash is acceptable and if you are able to make change. Having a clear policy on rent payment and making the process easy for your tenants helps you to ensure timely and complete collection of rent money.

When your tenants are late try to speak with them to find out when you can expect the payment. Be sure to remind them of the fine they will be charged. This discussion may help you to collect rent quickly but more importantly ensures that you don't risk losing the right to these fees that you created in the lease. Some people are unaware that if you waive these penalties early on you will have a hard time justifying them should you have to go into lien sale procedures with a tenant.

Cont...

## Links:

### NHSSA Website:

[www.nhssa.net](http://www.nhssa.net)

### National Website:

[www.selfstorage.org](http://www.selfstorage.org)

### Maine S S A:

[www.mainessa.com](http://www.mainessa.com)

### New Hampshire lien sale laws:

[www.selfstorages.com/lien\\_law/nh.htm](http://www.selfstorages.com/lien_law/nh.htm)

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# Taking the headaches out of collections

## Continued.....

Do your best to create a professional buffer between you and your tenants so they are less likely to air their excuses and just make the payment. If you are the one who is the face of the office try to use someone else such as a friend or relative to make collection calls. This approach creates the image of a bigger entity that is serious about collecting their money while keeping you on good terms with your tenants and ensuring payments.

Try to know when late payments are likely because your tenants are not home. If tenants are students with breaks or frequent travelers out of town suggest they make arrangements to pay the rent early or mail it, but not to be late or there will be fees.

Handle any maintenance issues promptly but never by taking a reduction in the rent. One big mistake that many managers make is to allow deductions from the rent

for physical issues with a unit in order to buy time to fix it.

On the surface it may seem like a reasonable action but it creates a situation where tenants can dispute the amount owed or open the door for them to short future checks because of repairs that you haven't had a chance to make. It also sets a precedent for tenants to look for any small problem in order to demand a rent reduction. Your best course is to apologize for any inconvenience and to assure them that it will be fixed as soon as possible,.

Anyone can make an invoice on a computer and it is a much better idea to handle all repairs yourself so that you know you are dealing with trustworthy people and have a record of what was done. As the final month of the tenancy nears, make sure you collect the rent on time. It is best to avoid letting tenants use the security deposit in lieu of rent in case there are damages to your property or unpaid bills.

## An Invitation from Maine Self Storage Assoc

Due to the success of their 2008 Legal Workshop, the Maine Self Storage Association is very pleased to announce that Attorney Scott Zucker, of the Atlanta law firm Weissmann & Zucker, P.C., will be returning to Maine to present another legal workshop in October of 2009.

Scott specializes in business litigation with an emphasis on real estate, landlord-tenant and construction law and represents companies throughout the country in resolving their commercial disputes in state or federal courts and through Alternate Dispute Resolution. This year they would like to extend the invitation to any NHSSA members who have an interest in attending the informative event.

Last year, MeSSA members chose the topics of interest which Scott addressed and followed up with a Question and Answer segment.

For a "breather" they enjoyed some Maine humor with Gary Crocker, who decided to

have a little fun with the "Attorney from Away"!

The great food and numerous Maine-made door prizes ensured that all who were in attendance enjoyed the day. This year they will have a similar format with plenty of Q & A time.

Scott Zucker, along with Attorney Carlos Kaslow, operates the Self Storage Legal Network, a subscription based legal service for self storage owners and managers. Scott authored Legal Topics in Self Storage and is a presenter at many workshops and webinars.

So don't forget to save the date of October 15, 2009 for this not-to-miss event! Bring your legal questions and get some answers!

Non-members are welcome to attend as long as space permits. Please call 207-490-1160 for more information or visit the Maine Self Storage Association's website if you would like to download an application to become a member.

<http://www.mainessa.com/>

## Sources:

### Taking the headaches out of collections:

[http://www.rentalsonline.com/landlords/collecting\\_rent.asp](http://www.rentalsonline.com/landlords/collecting_rent.asp)

### Need to make changes to you website?:

[Elaine@BusinessMasters.net](mailto:Elaine@BusinessMasters.net)

### Vendor Spotlight: Collin Box & Supply

[www.collinbox.com](http://www.collinbox.com)

### Beyond Security: Evaluating Self-Storage Safety Issues:

[www.insideselfstorage.com/articles/344/self-storage-facility-safety-procedure-review,p2.html](http://www.insideselfstorage.com/articles/344/self-storage-facility-safety-procedure-review,p2.html)

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# Need to make changes to your website?

The New Hampshire Self Storage Association would like to welcome and introduce a very talented web designer. Our computer savvy Elaine was born in Manchester, NH and in 1990 moved to Florida to escape the cold. She currently resides in Lake Mary with her husband 21 years, John.

The couple has 2 beautiful daughters, Kathryn who is 19 and Jennifer who is 16. Both of the young ladies are sophomores this year, one in high school and the other in college at Florida Gulf Coast University in Fort Myers. The family would not be complete without their beloved pet cat named Bella.

Elaine has been working on websites for the last 4 years and enjoys that she is always learning something new. Some of the valuable services that she would like to offer us include designing and maintaining web sites, creating custom web graphics and layouts, scripting flash intros, generating animated banners and much, much more.

Elaine is a beyond capable go-getter who will rise to any challenge, but will also be honest if not qualified to complete a task. In her own words "My rates are very reasonable and my turn around time is quick."

Please visit [www.NHSSA.net](http://www.NHSSA.net) or [nhselfstorage.com/Marco.htm](http://nhselfstorage.com/Marco.htm) for a couple of shining examples what Elaine has done for our company and start making a list of what she can do for yours.

**Need To Make Changes??**  
*Updates and Changes made in days... Not weeks*  
**Contact: Elaine@Businessmasters.net**  
*321-262-1365*

*Reasonable Rates* *Timely Turn Around*



## Vendor Spotlight: Collin Box & Supply

Collin Box has been a leader in the Packaging Industry for more than 60 years. Their commitment to Superior Service and Quality Products is second to none. Their available inventory includes Boxes, Bubble Wrap, Foam Packaging, Packaging Tapes, Labels, Padded Envelopes, Hand Trucks, Moving Dollies, Paper Packaging, Strapping Supplies and Mailing Tubes.

Collin Box and Supply is located at 55 Norfolk Ave South Easton, MA 02370.  
Telephone: (800) 962-2005      Web: [www.CollinBox.com](http://www.CollinBox.com)



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### Don't forget to support our other valuable vendor members:

<b>US Door &amp; Building Systems</b>	(407) 859-6770	<b>Construx Inc.</b>	(603) 536-3533
<b>Flexospan Steel Buildings, Inc.</b>	(800) 245-0396	<b>On the Move, Inc.</b>	(800) 645-9949
<b>Open Tech Alliance, Inc.</b>	(631) 451-7211	<b>Pivotal Payments</b>	(877) 462-7486
<b>Rabco Corp.</b>	(508) 269-9866	<b>Rib Roof</b>	(800) 876-9062
<b>Can-Am Building Systems Corp.</b>	(508) 272-9724	<b>Riess Const.,LLC</b>	(603) 536-7756
<b>Storage Auction Solutions</b>	(978) 777-5850	<b>Syrasoft, LLC</b>	(315) 708-0341
<b>Trachte Bldg. System</b>	(800) 356-5824	<b>Watson Insurance</b>	(603) 668-4800

# Beyond Security: Evaluating Self-Storage Safety Issues

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Although self-storage operators often fixate on security little emphasis is placed on safety. The two may seem to go hand in hand but it is important to review safety issues regularly. Here's what should be evaluated two to four times per year:

**Gates.** Gates are a great security item for any self-storage site. Does yours still work properly? It's easy for an electronic eye to get pushed out of place, making this important function of the gate suddenly a liability. Make sure yours is working properly.

**Emergency lights.** Are the batteries up to date? Do all the lights function properly? These can easily get knocked around by tall items on carts. Many storage facilities can be a maze for folks who are unfamiliar with the layout. Proper exit signage and lighting is vital. Make sure to keep them lit.

**Cameras.** It's a good idea to review your camera system at least quarterly to ensure it's recording correctly. If you notice cameras are no longer positioned correctly, you should review the tape and carefully check your facility. Someone may have moved it out of range for a reason that is not to your benefit. Find out and fix the problem.

**Elevators.** Are your emergency telephones working in the elevators? Step inside and try to make a call. If someone gets stuck inside your elevator, you'll want to be sure they can get help immediately. Check the elevators and phones on a quarterly basis.

**Lights.** Check to see that your lights are working properly. This can help you save money as well as add to site safety. Indoor lights on motion sensors will ensure tenant areas are well lit when needed. Outside lights should be checked at night to make sure they are working and are bright enough to adequately light the facility.

**Safety equipment.** Take an inventory of emergency and non-emergency equipment, such as a first-aid kit, gloves, goggles, wet-floor sign, etc. Replace any missing or worn-out items. The annual inspection of the fire extinguishers is imperative. Your county may have additional requirements for the fire-prevention systems at your site. Keeping these up to date is not only critical, it can be life saving.

**Tools.** Review the facility tools and equipment used at the site by staff and tenants alike. Check that cords are not frayed and items are being handled and stored properly. This includes roll-up doors as well as locks, dollies, carts, etc.

**Chemicals.** Check the handling and storage methods of all cleaning supplies and chemicals used at the site. See if the MSD sheets are current and legible. Our rental agreements are generally clear about the storage of hazardous materials, but are we guilty of violating this clause ourselves? Take an inventory of the chemicals and make sure you do not have a problem fermenting unknowingly.

**Physical property review.** Walk your facility with a critical eye toward safety. Are there places where accidents could happen? Are traffic patterns clearly marked? Are there bollards in proper places as needed? Repairing potholes, re-stripping directional arrows and adding cautionary signage can help with safety issues while adding value to the site as well. Walk the perimeter of your site, too. You might be surprised to discover graffiti, safety issues or disrepair that needs attention.

**Staff training.** Is your staff properly trained to handle specific incidents such as a tenant injury, natural disaster, fire or other eventualities? Make sure you have a written policy for how your staff should respond. Include staff members in your safety review of the site so they can see what you look for when you do your review. Also, make sure they have an emergency contact list of people and phone numbers, and know who and when to call. Training also needs to include how to deal with the media. Be prepared by letting employees know who the media contact person is. All inquiries should be directed to this person to avoid confusion.

**Safety procedures for making bank deposits, opening and closing the store and when showing a potential renter the facility should be part of the new hire training for staff.** In addition, employees should understand your expectations in the event of a robbery or other incident.

When a crisis arises, you want to take immediate action. So, while you are considering the security items at your site, take time now to train your staff and put a safety policy in place. Security is a good thing, but security teamed with safety is much better