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Greater Portland Chapter: 5 tips to managing chaos

Ask anyone on the street if they have a story about something going completely wrong at the worst possible time, and nine 10 of ten times they'll answer "yes."

As property managers, we could tell these stories for hours, and we'd be describing a typical workday. We are used to dealing with routine chaotic situations. Chaos can ensue from any number of crazy maintenance issues, upset clients or turnover within your staff.

As professional property managers, it's important for us to find solutions to help minimize the effect of chaotic events. NARPM® is great at introducing us to products and services that do just that, utilizing maintenance coordination software to streamline work orders, becoming skillful and proactive in client relations with our owners, or cross-training remote team members to help temporarily cover in a pinch.

These are all important steps we can take in our business. But what should we be doing when the chaos becomes too much to handle?

IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM

Before you can come up with a solution you need to be able to identify what the problem is and how severe it has become. Focus on who is most impacted by the issue and put yourself in their shoes as to what their major concerns are. Looking through the lens of who is affected most will help you and your team come up with an effective solution.

GATHER INPUT, STAY FLEXIBLE

Bring in necessary personnel to troubleshoot the issue, and come up with several viable solutions. Try and pick apart suggestions to see if there are any unintended consequences with the ideas. This is essential for the success of an effective plan for problems we face. The best solution may be a combination of two or more ideas. Staying flexible when gathering input is key to obtaining the best resolution.

DELEGATE EFFECTIVELY

Far too often one small issue can turn into several large problems. When a dishwasher stops working it may be obvious that it needs to be replaced because it is an older appliance. It could also be because the drain line is blocked causing water to build up and leak. A frustrated tenant and an irritated owner can be an explosive mixture. Small routine things can escalate at a moment's notice and can feel never-ending. Trust your team and empower them to help stop small problems from turning into much larger issues.

BE UNDERSTANDING

The worst type of chaos to manage is when you find yourself with your hands tied. A tenant might be upset that their washing machine broke, and the necessary part to repair it is backordered. Staying in contact throughout the repair is vital so that the tenant feels respected. At the end of the day, it doesn't matter if the part takes two days or two weeks to arrive, but if the tenant hasn't heard from anyone (the vendor or our team), suddenly they can feel neglected or that no one is working on their issue. Let the tenant know that we haven't heard any new info yet, but we'll reach out to them directly when we do.

LEARN FROM WHAT WENT WRONG

At the end of the day, no matter how hard we work at trying to eliminate chaos from occurring, it'll still find a way to disrupt our routine and force us to deal with it one way or another. Chaos is a part of life, and the property management industry seems to have its way of creating chaos all the time.

Focus on identifying how a problem started and what can be done to help reduce the chances of something similar happening again. This doesn't mean that we'll never see the same issue again, but it will mean that our team will be better prepared at handling it when we are faced with challenges down the line. 📌