



Matejka Law, LLC Reveals Steps Landlords Can Take When Tenants Alter Rental Property

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Matejka Law, LLC, has published guidance for landlords on how to respond to unauthorized property changes made by tenants in rental units. Written for landlords and property managers in Goose Creek and across South Carolina, it outlines a sequence of steps that begins with the lease and ends with the legal remedies available when a dispute remains unresolved. It addresses situations that can leave an owner unsure how to act without escalating a disagreement, such as discovering that a tenant repainted or replaced fixtures without approval.

The guidance identifies the lease as the starting point. A landlord reviewing an unapproved alteration first determines what the tenant was permitted to change, since work such as repainting or replacing fixtures may violate lease terms when the agreement requires approval. When approval was given, the next consideration is whether the completed work stayed within the authorized scope. The extent of the alteration can also influence whether the matter is treated as a minor concern or a more serious lease breach, and the landlord's next step should be guided by the agreement and applicable landlord-tenant laws.

Inspection and documentation form the second stage of the process. Before inspecting a suspected change, landlords must follow the legal requirements for entering a rental. Section 27-40-530 of the South Carolina Residential Landlord and Tenant Act generally requires landlords to give at least 24 hours' notice before entering. It allows entry only at reasonable times, with exceptions including emergencies. The firm advises taking dated photographs and comparing the unit's current condition with move-in records, because that documentation can help establish whether property damage occurred during the tenancy.

Written communication is the third stage. When an alteration violates the lease or relates to landlord repair responsibilities, written notices can document the issue and the steps taken to address it. Section 27-40-710 of the same Act addresses tenant noncompliance with a rental agreement. It allows at least 14 days to remedy certain breaches after written notice, and a correction notice can state what the tenant must correct under the lease. The firm encourages landlords to keep notices and tenant responses together to record the dispute timeline. Following the required notice procedures can help preserve the ability to pursue further remedies if the breach continues.

When unauthorized property changes remain unresolved after proper notice, the guidance explains that landlords may need to consider formal legal remedies, including court action where appropriate under the lease and applicable law. After the tenancy ends, a security deposit may be applied to qualifying tenant-caused damage, subject to security deposit deduction rules and notice requirements. The firm cautions against self-help measures such as changing locks without permission or interrupting essential services, noting that these actions can create separate legal problems for the landlord. The firm published the full guidance on its website in August 2026 and states that it is general information and does not constitute legal advice for any specific situation.

Matejka Law, LLC, is a South Carolina law firm based in Summerville that serves as a landlord-tenant attorney in Goose Creek and advises landlords and property managers on lease enforcement, evictions, security deposit disputes, and tenant-caused damage. According to the firm, Attorney Nataliya Matejka brings more than 20 years of property management experience and has handled more than 700 eviction cases.

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Matejka Law LLC

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