

## ■ EMPLOYEE HOUSING ACT

**TERMS:** The Employee Housing Act requires the licensing and inspection of labor camps and other housing facilities provided to 5 or more workers by their employer, and certain rural housing accommodations used by 5 or more agricultural workers as a temporary or seasonal residence.

**Licensing** — No one may operate a labor camp without a valid permit issued by the state. A permit may be issued for from one to 5 years, depending on the type of facility.

**Inspections** — At least once each year, state or local enforcement officials must inspect all registered labor camps and any attached equipment and accommodations, to assure compliance with the detailed health and safety standards included in the state regulations. Among the factors considered in determining if a housing facility meets licensing standards are these:

- The building site and structures
- Sleeping areas and accommodations
- Kitchens and mess halls
- Fire equipment and procedures
- The plumbing system and sanitation facilities
- The water system
- Heating equipment
- The electrical system and fixtures

**Tenants' Rights** — No one who operates a labor camp consisting only of permanent units may increase rent, decrease services, evict, threaten not to renew occupancy, or otherwise retaliate against a tenant because of a complaint by the tenant concerning the housing facility or the exercise of any other right under the Act.

**Complaints** — Any person living in housing subject to this law may file a complaint with the state or local enforcement agency, provided the person also delivers a copy of the complaint to the employer at the same time.

**ENFORCEMENT:** *Employee Housing Program, Codes and Standards Division, California Department of Housing and Community Development, Sacramento, California 95833 (916-445-9471).*

Under certain conditions, the Department may authorize a city or county agency to enforce these provisions within the agency's local area.

If the state or local enforcement agency does not take legal action against an employer or housing operator within 21 days after a complaint regarding employee housing is filed, the worker may sue the employer or operator directly, using a private attorney or a public legal services program.