**Residential Tenancies Act changes support safer homes for tenants**

Recent changes to the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) will help make rental homes warmer, drier and safer. Key changes include new requirements for insulation and smoke alarms.

Insulation helps keep homes warm and dry in winter, and assists in mitigating health issues associated with cold and damp housing – particularly in children and the elderly. To help tenants to make an informed decision when considering a rental home, the RTA now requires landlords provide a statement about the location, type and condition of insulation in property in all new tenancy agreements.

All residential rental homes in New Zealand will also be required to have insulation in the ceiling and underfloor by July 2019. Tenants and landlords are encouraged to work together to find a suitable time to arrange inspections and insulation install to ensure houses meet the new standards in time for the deadline. Insulation in social housing (where tenants pay an income related rent) should already meet the new standards, due to the changes being in place from 1 July 2016 for these properties.

Smoke alarms were made compulsory in all rental properties on 1 July 2016. Landlords are required to ensure there are working smoke alarms in the right places in their residential rental homes.  Any new or replacement alarms installed post this date need to have long life batteries and photoelectric sensors.  Hardwired smoke alarms are also permitted. Tenants are responsible for replacing worn-out batteries in the smoke alarms and informing their landlord of any defects. Working smoke alarms save lives so these new requirements will help make rental properties safer for tenants and their families.

The changes to the Residential Tenancies Act aim to improve the health and safety of New Zealand’s rental property stock, and enhance day to day living conditions renters.  To find out more about the changes visit the Tenancy Services website [www.tenancy.govt.nz](http://www.tenancy.govt.nz).