

# State Protections for Tenants Needing Police or Emergency Assistance

The right to call for police or emergency assistance is crucial for everyone -- including survivors of domestic and sexual violence, as well as persons with disabilities. However, in many places across the country, the ability to call for such assistance can result in penalties simply for calling for help. Local laws known as "nuisance ordinances" often impose penalties on property owners for activity on their properties considered to be "nuisance" activity. Because "nuisance" activity is broadly defined, these ordinances may capture conduct such as making a certain number of calls for police or emergency assistance related to a particular property within a specific time period -- including reporting domestic violence. In response to nuisance citations from a city or town, property owners often evict renters to avoid penalties.

A number of states have laws that protect someone's right to call police or emergency assistance, though the level of protection varies by state. Federal law may offer additional protections. For additional resources, visit: [www.nhlp.org/initiatives/nuisance/](http://www.nhlp.org/initiatives/nuisance/)

## Types of State Protections



Protections for tenants so that they do not have to give up (or have leases that limit) the right to call police or emergency assistance:

*AZ, AR, CA, CO, IA, KY, LA, MN, NY, TX, UT + DC + Virgin Islands*



Protections for tenants so that their landlords cannot penalize them for calling police or emergency assistance:

*AZ, CA, CO, DE, DC, IA, KY, LA, ME, MN, NV, NY, OR, TX, UT + DC + Virgin Islands*



Protections from penalties by cities and towns for calls to police or emergency assistance:

*AK, CA, IL, IN, IA, LA, MN, NV, NY, PA, UT, WI*  
(Note that some states specify the types of calls that are protected from local penalties.)

20 states  
have at least  
some protections

Alaska	Louisiana
Arkansas	Maine
Arizona	Minnesota
California	Nevada
Colorado	New York
Delaware	Oregon
Illinois	Pennsylvania
Indiana	Texas
Iowa	Utah
Kentucky	Wisconsin
+	
District of Columbia	
+	
U.S. Virgin Islands	

