

For Immediate Release: Update on Creighton Court Heating Issues

RRHA announces that it will be coordinating with residents affected by the shut-off of the central heating system in several buildings at Creighton Court to move to alternate housing by the end of the day today. Although RRHA staff has inspected the impacted units and confirmed that electric space heaters were sufficient to safely maintain temperatures between 66 and 72 degrees, it has determined that offering alternate housing is the most prudent course of action given the unseasonably cold weather forecasted for the next few days. RRHA appreciates the many notes of concern and offers of assistance that it has received from community members since the issue was first reported.

To the extent available, impacted residents will be moved to other units within RRHA's portfolio. Additionally, RRHA will secure hotel rooms for impacted residents for whom alternate RRHA units are not available. RRHA staff will be contacting impacted residents individually this afternoon. RRHA staff will coordinate with the impacted residents to facilitate the move, with a goal of getting each impacted resident into alternate housing by the end of the day today.

RRHA is extremely grateful to Shamin Hotels, and in particular CEO Neil Amin. Shamin Hotels has generously offered to provide temporary accommodations to impacted residents at no charge.

Previous Statement: 1/3/18

As a safety measure, the central heat supply to the nine affected buildings in Creighton Court (containing 54 occupied units) was shut off in October to prevent the ceilings from collapsing as they absorbed water from leaking supply pipes. In order to continue providing heat to these units, electric space heaters have been provided to residents. These space heaters are approved for residential use and contain trip-hazard protection. RRHA has tested units utilizing space heaters and determined that units are maintaining temperatures ranging from 66-72 degrees. The notion that the affected residents have been "without heat" is demonstrably untrue, and obscures the complex nature of the challenges that RRHA faces.

While the facilities needs of the Richmond Public School system have dominated headlines recently, an underappreciated fact is that RRHA's public housing stock is in similarly poor condition. Studies estimate that RRHA's aging public housing portfolio has over \$150 million in identified capital needs, and receives the equivalent of \$750 per year, per unit, to address these needs. Needless to say, this sum is woefully insufficient and necessitates that RRHA deal with many serious problems in a reactive rather than proactive manner, doing its best to triage competing priorities.

The situation in Creighton Court involves iron pipes supplying hot water from central boilers to individual radiators in several buildings, which have corroded over time and have sprung leaks. These pipes run through the ceilings and are wrapped in asbestos insulation, as was

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customary decades ago when these buildings were constructed. The concealed placement of the pipes, and the environmental concerns associated with disturbing asbestos insulation, complicates the task of repairing or replacing the pipes. RRHA has been exploring cost-effective and minimally-invasive solutions, while also balancing the many competing challenges that afflict RRHA's concentrations of obsolete public housing.

RRHA has secured approval from HUD to use available capital funds to replace the heating pipes in the affected buildings with high temperature-resistant plastic pipes installed in the interior of the buildings to reconnect the radiators and restore central heat to the units. RRHA is securing multiple contractors to complete the work within 30 days following award using an emergency procurement process. A site visit for the contractors occurred today, and bids are due on January 12, 2018, after which time work will proceed with all deliberate speed.

RRHA has also been inspecting the affected units to ensure that appropriate heat levels are maintained through the current cold snap, to encourage residents to avoid unnecessary and unsafe practices like utilizing ovens for heat, and to ensure that residents' questions and concerns are being addressed. RRHA will continue working with HUD and City Officials to ensure that residents in the affected units are warm and safe during this severe cold snap.