

Apartment Complex Pays \$35,000 in Damages for Refusing to Accommodate a Tenant with a Disability

On August 10, 2009, the federal court in Tacoma, Washington, approved a settlement of the Department's lawsuit against the former owners and managers of Valley View Apartments in Longview, Washington. In 2004, a tenant who has a mobility disability asked to use two contiguous parking spaces in the apartment complex's lot until until the owners marked out an accessible space in the lot. The lawsuit alleged that John E. and Shirley L. Price violated the Fair Housing Act by refusing the tenant's request and by seeking to evict him after he requested the accommodation. (See previous article in issue # 19.) Under the settlement, the defendants were required to pay \$35,000 in damages to the complainant.

"Individuals with disabilities have the basic right to expect reasonable accommodations that allow them access to housing. This settlement is a significant award for a case involving housing discrimination against a lone individual, and it should send a strong message to landlords that they must take all requests for reasonable accommodations very seriously," said Acting Assistant Attorney General Loretta King.

"The fact that people continue to be denied housing in the 21st century because of their disability is unacceptable," said John Trasviña, Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity at the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). "This conduct has been illegal for more than 20 years, and we intend to enforce the full extent of the law."

The case was referred to the Department by HUD, which investigated the tenant's complaint and determined that there was reasonable cause to believe that the defendants had engaged in discrimination.

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