

Damage Billing Policy

Rationale

According to the terms of the housing agreement, students are responsible for the condition of their room and any shared spaces. The Residence Life Office makes every attempt to attribute damage and vandalism charges to the individual(s) responsible, but when those responsible are not identified, all members of a unit, room, floor, or building may be charged equally for damages. It is our hope that affected residents will cooperate with the Residence Life Office to ensure that those responsible are held accountable.

Excessive cleaning or damage charges are assessed when cleaning or damage extends beyond Facilities and Service Management staff's standard duties. Examples of excessive cleaning and damage include, but are not limited to: clean-up of trash/recycling that was not properly disposed of by the student(s); removal of belongings abandoned by the student(s) after checkout; bodily fluids in public/private areas; debris from fire extinguishers being discharged; food and beverages in public/private areas; confetti/glitter; removal of graffiti; residue from adhesive-backed decorations; repair of carpet and upholstery damage; painting and wall repairs, regardless of cause; and/or replacement of furniture removed from a unit, room, or lounge.

Checkout Process

The Residence Life Office conducts two forms of checkouts for residents:

1. **Traditional Checkout:** During a traditional checkout, an RA accompanies the student to their unit to complete a room inspection and complete the checkout envelope. All first year residents must complete a traditional checkout. Second-year, junior, and senior residents may choose either a traditional checkout or an express checkout. Residents completing a traditional checkout must make arrangements with a residence life staff member at least 24 hours before their planned checkout. Residents who complete a traditional checkout will not be informed of any damage billing at the time of checkout; damage billing assessments will be completed by professional staff members from Residence Life and Facilities after all residents have moved out of the space.
2. **Express Checkout:** Second-year, junior, and senior residents may also choose to go through an express checkout process. During this process, the student collects an Express Checkout envelope from Residence Life (envelopes available from RAs, professional staff, and near envelope return boxes in the residence halls), completes fields on the envelope, and submits the envelope to the designated area/location. Residents who use the express checkout process waive their right to appeal any damages charges.

Note about improper checkouts: Failure to complete a Traditional or Express checkout, or failure to properly complete the checkout steps will result in an improper checkout. Examples of improper checkout procedures include but are not limited to failure to schedule a traditional checkout at least 24 hours in advance, lack of preparedness for a scheduled traditional checkout, and failure to vacate an on campus residence by published move out deadlines. An improper checkout will result in an automatic fine and waiver of all right to appeal any damage bills.

Damage Billing Process

All damage billing assessments will be completed by professional staff members from Residence Life and Facilities and Service Management after all students have moved out of the living space. Final room inspections are NOT conducted by student staff at the time of checkout. Facilities Management is responsible for all repairs and determines the cost of any damage. These amounts are pre-determined and are based upon charges for time, labor, and materials.

All damage bills will be assessed to a student's account during the month of June, after the conclusion of Spring Term. Students are encouraged to check their bills during this time to review any damage bills incurred.

Damage Bill Appeals Process

Important Note: The Damage Billing Appeals Process has no correlation with the Student Conduct appeals process.

The process for determining housing charges includes assessing damages and the cleanliness of your housing unit (common area, kitchen, bathroom and bedroom, etc.) and the community as whole (lobbies, lounges, floors/corridors, etc.).

The deadline for damage billing appeals is e-mailed to residents at the end of the academic year. All appeals submitted after the deadline period will not be considered.

Appeals must be submitted via the online form available in the housing portal. The housing portal can be found by going to InsideAlma < Links < Student Housing. Phone calls, messages, and letters will not be considered an appeal. Appeals cannot be submitted by parents, guardians, or any individual other than the student who lived in the space. This allows our staff to have an informed and educational connection with the student while also respecting each student's right to privacy.

All residents who submit an appeal before the deadline will receive notice within two to three weeks regarding the status of their appeal. Once a decision has been communicated regarding the appeal, the decision is final.

If the room damage charges result in a financial hold being placed on a student's account, the student may need to pay the amount due and then receive a refund upon an approved appeal. The Residence Life Office is not able to lift a financial hold on a student's account.

Grounds for a Housing Cleaning/Damage Charge Appeal

Students may appeal damage bills on the following grounds:

- If you believe that you have been billed for damages that should be considered "normal wear and tear."
- If you receive a charge that you believe to be a duplicate.
- You were billed for damages to a room to which you were not assigned.

- The damage was listed on the Room Condition Report at move in. Please note that this will be verified by residence life staff during the appeals process.

Students may NOT appeal damage bills on the following grounds:

- Someone else caused the damage (including a roommate). If a student believes that another individual is responsible for the damage, the responsible party would need to come forward and accept responsibility in writing before the student can be found not responsible for the damage bill. Without this documentation, the appeal will not be granted. The responsible party would need to step forward before the appeal deadline expires. It is the student's responsibility to contact the responsible party; Alma College will not contact these individuals on the student's behalf.
- The student was not informed of damage or billing at the time of checkout. Damage assessments are completed by professional staff after students have checked out and the residence halls are closed. During check out, the staff will only check whether keys have been returned.
- The bill is too high. All damage bills are assessed by Residence Life and Facilities. Facilities and Service Management is responsible for all repairs and determines the final cost of any damage. These amounts are pre-determined and are based upon charges for time, labor, and materials.
- Time constraints during move out. All required move out dates are published in advance in the housing agreement for each year. Students also receive notice of all checkout procedures and move out dates from residence life staff in advance of the move out.
- Lack of knowledge of proper checkout procedures. All move out and closing information is communicated by Residence Life staff through email correspondence, community or floor meetings and/or community bulletin boards. Students are encouraged to contact Residence Life staff with questions before completing their checkout.

Important Note: If students who complete an express checkout or checkout improperly waive their right to appeal any charges (this information is also noted in all closing communication).