

Breaking a Lease in Tennessee: Tenant Rights and Landlord Options

Summary for landlords and property managers. Last reviewed October 29, 2026. Full guide: <https://www.generationadvisory.com/laws/tennessee-breaking-a-lease>

Tennessee tenants who are survivors of domestic abuse, sexual assault or stalking can end a lease with documentation, and federal law protects service members. When a tenant leaves early, covered landlords must try to re-rent.

Key points

- A service member can end a residential lease after entering active service, or after receiving permanent change of station or deployment orders, with written notice and a copy of the orders.
- If fire or other casualty makes the unit substantially unusable, the tenant may move out at once and end the lease by written notice within 14 days.
- In covered counties, if a tenant abandons the unit the landlord must use reasonable efforts to re-rent it at a fair rent, and the old lease ends when a new tenancy begins.
- In covered counties either side ends a month to month tenancy with written notice at least 30 days before the rent date named in the notice.
- A tenant who is, or whose household member is, a victim of domestic abuse, sexual assault or stalking can end the lease with written notice, a release date within 30 days and a qualifying protection order or police based charge, and owes rent for the month the tenancy ends.

Tennessee at a glance

Rule	Tennessee	Law
Military service	A service member can end a residential lease after entering active service, or after receiving permanent change of station or deployment orders, with written notice and a copy of the orders.	Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (50 U.S.C. 3955)
Domestic violence survivors	A tenant who is, or whose household member is, a victim of domestic abuse, sexual assault or stalking can end the lease with written notice, a release date within 30 days and a qualifying protection order or police based charge, and owes rent for the month the tenancy ends.	Uniform Residential Landlord and Tenant Act

Rule	Tennessee	Law
Unlivable conditions	If fire or other casualty makes the unit substantially unusable, the tenant may move out at once and end the lease by written notice within 14 days.	Tenn. Code Ann. 66-28-503
Landlord duty to re-rent	In covered counties, if a tenant abandons the unit the landlord must use reasonable efforts to re-rent it at a fair rent, and the old lease ends when a new tenancy begins.	Tenn. Code Ann. 66-28-507(c)
Month-to-month notice	In covered counties either side ends a month to month tenancy with written notice at least 30 days before the rent date named in the notice.	Tenn. Code Ann. 66-28-512

Mistakes to avoid

- Billing the tenant for every remaining month without trying to re-rent the unit.
- Ignoring a protected early termination notice because it is inconvenient.
- Agreeing to an early exit by phone without a written agreement.
- Keeping more of the deposit than the lawful deductions.

Verify current law

Laws named in this summary:

- Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (50 U.S.C. 3955)
- Uniform Residential Landlord and Tenant Act
- Tenn. Code Ann. 66-28-503
- Tenn. Code Ann. 66-28-507(c)
- Tenn. Code Ann. 66-28-512

Official sources:

- Tennessee General Assembly: <https://www.capitol.tn.gov/>
- Tennessee Code (official publisher, public access): <https://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/tncode/>
- Tennessee State Courts: <https://www.tncourts.gov/>

General information, not legal advice. Check current law and talk to a Tennessee attorney before you act. Last reviewed October 29, 2026.