**SPRING**

Some Watermark owners can use their garages as workshops and storage areas, but Rental Group members do not have quite the same luxury, as their garages are part and parcel of the vacation rental package they’re offering.



**Spring cleaning memo:  Don't forget the garage**

Now is the time – before the summer onslaught -- to secure anything in your personal garages that is not for renter use. This has been one of those fuzzy areas in the past, and understandably so, what with some owners having no problem with renters using the beach chairs and water toys stored in their garages and others objecting to them “helping themselves to our personal stuff.”

Because garages areas are part and parcel of each Watermark rental, they need to be treated as a renter amenity by Rental Group members. We who rent out our places should just assume that our renters will see anything unsecured that is recreational or beach-related as an amenity they’ve paid for the use of. Remember, our rental guests are here to have fun and enjoy the place; they’ve paid handsomely for their summer stays, so if they see a beach umbrella, boogie board, bicycle, surfboard or barbecue grill in the garage, it is only natural that they would assume the owner intended to make those items available to them as a nice benefit of their vacation rental.

The flip side of that, of course, is that if you want exclusive use of your beach toys, you MUST find a way to secure them for your use only. Put them in a lockable cabinet, storage unit or wall locker. Chain them to the wall. Chain them all together. Mark them “Owners Only.” Stash them in your attic. Do whatever it takes to make it clear that this stuff is off-limits.

Most of us have a mix of things in our garages – some for renter use and others strictly personal/family. We can't realistically expect our managers to keep track of it all. We must find a way to distinguish between the two (i.e. small padlocks, signage posted in the garage and reinforced, perhaps, by a pleasant note on a bulletin board inside the unit).

A related problem is when the beach gear left for renters in the garage doesn’t come back. Typically, when this has happens, the missing items haven't been stolen but rather returned mistakenly to another Watermark garage. It can easily occur when multiple parties of a larger group are occupying several units during the same week. The best way to prevent such mix-ups is by clearly marking each item with the unit number. At least if the marked item ends up in a different unit or garage, an honest person will try and get it back to the proper owner, or take it to the office so the managers can get it back its owner.

If we rent out our units we take on liability concerns… and must do what we can to remove anything potentially unsafe to our tenants.