



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
**DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING &
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Charles D. Baker, Governor ♦ Karyn E. Polito, Lieutenant Governor ♦ Chrystal Komegay, Undersecretary

PUBLIC HOUSING NOTICE 2017-03

To: All Local Housing Authority Executive Directors
From: Simone A. Early, Architect, Assistance Director AESU
Subject: Emergency Pull Cords/Light Systems
Date: January 24, 2017

With this Notice, DHCD is recommending that all Local Housing Authorities (LHAs) decommission all emergency pull cord systems that DO NOT connect to an emergency response system. LHAs should wait until unit turnover or a major unit modernization before deactivating/removing a pull cord in a unit.

Many years ago, these “pull cord to exterior lightbulb” alert systems were installed as a safety feature in the chapter 667 portfolio. However, according to the Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA), these types of pull cords may actually create a false sense of security for residents who assume that the activation of the pull cord will result in someone coming to assist them. Given this, DHCD recommends decommissioning these types of pull cords during unit turnover and instead advises LHAs to encourage residents to obtain a Personal Emergency Response System (PERS). PERS are available free of charge to elderly individuals receiving MassHealth or Home Care benefits.

To learn more about PERS, LHAs can contact the local Aging Service Access Point agency found online at <https://contactus.800ageinfo.com/FindAgency.aspx>

NOTE: During unit modernization, a tenant may request, as a reasonable accommodation, that an old pull cord remain operable. However, in the process of responding to the reasonable accommodation request, the LHA should explain the limitations of the existing pull cord and the availability of the PERS as an alternative for the tenant. The LHA should offer to purchase the PERS if the tenant does not have insurance coverage.

If you have questions about this Notice, please contact Simone.Early@state.ma.us.