

My Landlord Locked Me Out, Threw Out My Property or Shut off My Utilities - Is this legal and what can I do?

The landlord **cannot** physically remove you from the rental property.

Under Wisconsin Law, it is illegal for a landlord to use “self-help” methods to evict you from a rental property. Common forms of “self-help” that are illegal in Wisconsin include:

- Locking a tenant out of their unit.
- Shutting off the utilities including, reducing heat, water, or electricity to a dwelling unit.
- Throwing out the tenants belongings.

Before a landlord can legally evict you from your home, they have to get permission from the court. If the court gives them permission to legally evict you and you do not leave on your own, they'll send a sheriff to make you leave. Note: The sheriff is the only person who can physically remove you from your home. The landlord cannot physically remove you from the rental property.

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What if my landlord is threatening to lock me out or turn off my utilities?

Tell your landlord it's against the law for them to lock you out, or turn off your utilities. If they want you to leave, they have to go to court first. It's also a good idea to keep your ID and proof that you live there with you, in case you do get locked out.

What should I do if I am locked out?

1. Call the local sheriff's department immediately and ask them to help you get back into your unit.
2. Make sure to document everything that happens, including the date, time, and the way the landlord locked you out or turned off your utilities. It is almost important to keep documentation of any costs that you run up due to the landlord's illegal actions.
3. Reach out to your landlord immediately to ask about the situation. Politely remind them that locking you out or turning off utilities without a court order is illegal and request that they unlock your unit and/or restore your utilities.
4. If they refuse to let you back in or restore your utilities, you may file a complaint with the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) or your local housing authority. You can file a complaint with consumer protection by calling (800) 422-7128 or [online/by mail](#). They can investigate the situation and take appropriate action against the landlord if necessary.
5. If all other attempts fail, you may need to take legal action against your landlord. This could involve filing a lawsuit for damages, seeking an injunction (court order) directing the landlord to allow you access to the unit or restore your utilities, or pursuing other remedies available under Wisconsin law. If you would like to seek legal help, try our [Get Help Tool](#).

How long do I have to start a lawsuit against my landlord?

You must sue your landlord within three years of the date of the violation.

[Lockouts & Other illegal evictions](#) [Eviction](#) [Housing](#)

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