

Tempted to smuggle in a washer? Be careful

After sticker shock, one of the biggest real estate surprises for new New Yorkers is the scarcity of what is considered a basic necessity elsewhere: An in-unit washer-dryer.

While it's true that in the last decade, apartments in many newer buildings have come equipped with washer-dryers, many older buildings — which comprise the vast majority of housing inventory here — continue to ban the machines.

"The core problem with washer-dryer units is that the flow of water often overwhelms the limited plumbing capacity of older buildings," says Dean M. Roberts, a co-op and condo attorney with Norris McLaughlin & Marcus in Manhattan.

The result: Sudsy water that routinely backs up into the sinks and bathtubs of your neighbors. Or worse, an



If your washer-dryer causes a fire or flood, you will be responsible for damages.

aging pipe, pushed beyond capacity, finally bursts inside your apartment or someone else's.

It's tempting to take matters into your own hands and find a discreet plumber to install a washer-dryer.

So-called "high-efficiency" washing machines, which use less water and soap, reduce the risk of overwhelming your plumbing.

Be aware, though, that in the event of a flood or fire you could wind up owing

thousands to your neighbors and the building. So make sure your apartment insurance is up to date, says Jeff Schneider, president of Gotham Brokerage.

Depending on your circumstances, an alternative (besides moving) is to ask your landlord or board for a "reasonable accommodation" under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

You might be able to get an exception based on difficulty traveling to the laundry room or severe allergies, says Roberts, the real estate attorney. Bear in mind though that this is not common and is not likely to protect you in court should the appliances cause problems.

Real Estate

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BRICK UNDERGROUND

Teri Rogers is the founder and editor of Brick Underground.com, the online survival guide to finding a New York City apartment and living happily ever after.

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