

HOUSING

SF's Largest Landlord Suspends Coronavirus-Related Evictions

Veritas's self-imposed moratorium comes ahead of proposed legislation to protect renters.

by [Michael Toren](#) • 03/11/2020 5:11 pm - Updated 03/11/2020 5:26 pm



San Francisco's largest landlord said Wednesday it would voluntarily suspend evictions for residents financially affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

"It's Veritas trying to do the right thing for its residents during this time of great uncertainty," says Paul Rose, a spokesperson for Veritas Investments. The company owns 285 properties across the city, encompassing some 6,000 units, all of which are rent controlled.

The announcement came a day after District 5 Supervisor Dean Preston [introduced legislation on Tuesday](#) preventing landlords from evicting tenants over coronavirus-related loss of income.

"Clearly the private actors are getting the message that these types of evictions during a time of crisis are not okay," says Kyle Smeallie, a legislative aide for Preston. "I think it's a good example of why we push the envelope."

Preston's legislation would also suspend all "elective" evictions – such as evictions under the Ellis Act, owner move-in evictions, and capital improvement evictions, Smeallie says. The moratorium would remain in place while the [state of emergency Mayor London Breed declared on Feb. 25](#) is active. It would not prevent landlords from pursuing evictions for cause, such as an abusive tenant.

"We're very grateful that [Veritas] has seen the light and decided to voluntarily impose a moratorium in their own buildings," says Cary Gold, director of litigation at the Evictions Defense Collaborative. "The Preston legislation is good, but it isn't finalized yet – it hasn't gone through the city attorney's office for approval, and even if we get the legislation, it takes 30 days to go into effect."

For that reason, Gold says she's calling on Breed to take more immediate action.

"The mayor should continue looking at a moratorium on eviction court in general, and the sheriff to not evict during the next 50 days, at least," Gold says. "The mayor is empowered to do it (because) she called a state of emergency."

The mayor's office did not immediately respond to a request to comment on the proposal before press time.

Veritas's email to residents said tenants seeking eviction protection would "be asked to provide reasonable documentation substantiating your financial hardship," but did not spell out what forms of documentation would be acceptable.

"We're still finalizing the exact process, but we're going to work with each resident individually," Rose says.

To further increase "[social distancing](#)," as advised by the San Francisco Department of Public Health, Rose says Veritas is also pausing annual in-unit preventive maintenance walk-throughs, although residents are still able to report issues that need to be addressed sooner.

On Wednesday, the [World Health Organization declared coronavirus to officially be a pandemic](#). Eight countries are now reporting more than 1,000 cases each, and more than 100,000 people have been infected worldwide.

In San Francisco, the [number of reported cases](#) is 14 with no reported deaths, as of Wednesday.

If you are a Veritas resident financially affected by the coronavirus, you can contact the GreenTree Resident Services team at 415-347-8600.



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