

For Foreign Building Unit Owners:

Condominium Management

in Japan



This brochure describes the basic principles and systems of condominium management in Japan. It also details the responsibilities unit owners should fulfill to ensure every resident enjoys a comfortable and pleasant living environment.

01

Introduction: Condominium Management in Japan

Japanese condominiums are not merely apartment buildings; they are a community where residents cooperate to maintain a comfortable living environment. Called “building unit owners,” purchasers of condominium units are, unlike tenants, responsible not only for the exclusive use areas they purchased but also for managing common areas such as the building’s exterior walls, roofs, and elevators.

The systems and rules governing condominium management vary by country. In Japan, an organization called the “condominium management association,” composed of building unit owners, is responsible for establishing condominium rules and making decisions regarding condominium management and operations to maintain its safety and asset value. For foreign residents, some systems may be unfamiliar. However, to live with peace of mind in Japanese condominiums, it is extremely important to understand how the “condominium management association” and other condominium management arrangements work and to actively participate in them.

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02

Basic Principles of the Management Association (Unit Owners)

Since condominiums in Japan are a collective of private property, the entity responsible for their management is the condominium management association composed of the building unit owners, and that includes each and every one of you as members of the condominium management association. It is crucial for this condominium management association to work to maximize the service life of the condominium. It is the duty of its members to recognize their responsibilities, and manage the property appropriately while obtaining expert support as needed.

The national government policy also encourages condominium building unit owners to be fully aware of their roles as members of the condominium management association and mindful of the need for repairs, and to take an interest in and actively participate in the association’s operations, thereby striving to fulfill their responsibilities appropriately.

03

The Two Pillars of Condominium Management: Condominium Association Bylaws and the Condominium Management Association General Meeting

What are condominium association bylaws?

Each condominium has “condominium association bylaws” in place as the basic rules governing the management and use of the condominium. These condominium association bylaws apply to all residents of the condominium, including not only building unit owners but also tenants, and are therefore considered the highest governing rules for the condominium.

As the rules stipulated in the condominium association bylaws are very important, it is necessary to thoroughly review their contents.

What is a general meeting of the condominium management association?

Decisions regarding the content of these condominium association bylaws, as well as the condominium management association’s business plans, budgets, and other matters, are made by a majority vote of the building unit owners at a meeting called the “general meeting” of the condominium management association. The decision-making process involves submitting proposals, deliberation, and voting, while also requiring the participation and consensus-building of building unit owners.

Routine management tasks such as daily cleaning, facility inspections, and minor repair work are often performed by the condominium management association’s contracted maintenance companies. The general meeting of the condominium management association also determines the scope of work to be outsourced to these companies.

The asset value and quality of the living environment for the entire condominium are safeguarded if the condominium management association thoroughly understands the condition of its own building and enhances transparency and collaboration among residents.



04

To Ensure the Long Service Life of Your Condominium: Long-term Repair Plan and Contingency Reserve Fund

It is essential to perform timely and appropriate repair work on buildings and other facilities to address age-related deterioration to ensure a comfortable living environment in condominiums and maintain or enhance their asset value. To this end, it is necessary to establish a long-term repair plan that outlines the scope, timing and costs of anticipated future repair work. Based on this plan, it is also necessary to determine an amount of contingency reserve fund and accumulate a sufficient fund. In Japan, it is a common practice that building unit owners accumulate the fund necessary for future repair and other work on common areas of the condominium in a planned manner.

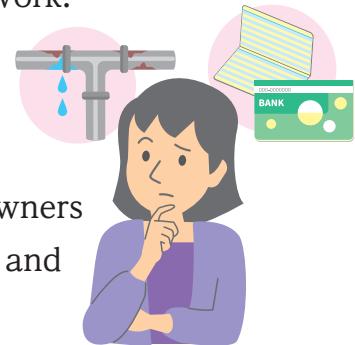
What is a long-term repair plan?

To prevent accidents such as exterior wall peeling in condominiums and to maintain building safety, comfort, and asset value, it is important to develop a “long-term repair plan” and review it regularly. The long-term repair plan defines the scope, timing, and cost of repair work (what work will be done, when, and at what cost) on common areas such as building exteriors, roofs, and elevators, for a period of 30 years or more. Developing such a plan in advance and ensuring that all building unit owners understand it facilitates systematic and smooth execution of repair work.



What is the contingency reserve fund?

The “contingency reserve fund” is a reserve systematically accumulated by all building unit owners to sufficiently cover anticipated future repair and replacement work, according to the long-term repair plan. If a sufficient reserve fund for necessary repair work is not accumulated and it cannot cover the repair costs, this may lead to sudden lump-sum collections or delays in repair work. If repair or maintenance work is not performed in a timely manner and the building deteriorates, safety could potentially be compromised. To maintain the safety, comfort, and asset value of the condominium, it is crucial that all building unit owners understand the need for a sufficient contingency reserve fund and cooperate to accumulate it according to the plan.



05

Daily Life: Manners for Comfortable and Pleasant Living

To ensure that condominium residents live comfortably, it is crucial to adhere to the condominium association bylaws established for each condominium and the ordinances set forth by local authorities. This is also vital for maintaining good relationships with other residents. It is important to live in compliance with the rules stipulated in the condominium association bylaws and set forth by the local governments. Failure to follow these rules may result in disputes among residents.

Garbage disposal etiquette

In Japan, garbage disposal rules are very strict and are specified in detail by area and by building. This is an important system for maintaining a clean environment and preventing neighborhood disputes. Garbage must be sorted into burnable waste, non-burnable waste and recyclable waste (cans, glass bottles, PET bottles, etc.). Sorted garbage must be placed at the designated location on the specified time and day of the week.

Many condominiums require residents to put out their garbage by 8:00 a.m., and some municipalities prohibit putting garbage out the night before the collection day. Therefore, it is necessary to confirm the rules of your municipality and condominium. If waste is not properly sorted or rules are not followed, garbage may not be collected and a warning notice may be attached to the garbage bag.

In Japan, people place great importance on “everyone following the rules,” and proper garbage disposal is part of that.

To live comfortably in a condominium, please understand these rules and cooperate in their implementation.



Noise etiquette

In Japan, a quiet living environment is highly valued in condominiums, and noise can cause serious problems. Loud voices, music, or footsteps at night can damage relationships with neighbors. Some condominiums have thin walls, and even slight noises can be heard in other units.

In Japan, consideration for others is highly valued and it is especially important in condominiums where residents live together. You are expected to be mindful of the noise



you make to maintain a comfortable living environment.

Your manners contribute to a better community.

Smoking etiquette

In Japan, some condominiums have strict rules in place regarding smoking in shared spaces. Particular caution should be exercised about smoking on condominium balconies as they are included in the common areas of the building. Smoking in common areas can cause smoke and odors to drift into private units, pose health risks and be a source of complaints. This may lead to a serious problem for households with children and the elderly, and may result in a dispute.

While smoking is a personal choice for the individual, smokers are responsible for people around them. Please smoke only in designated areas and cooperate in creating a comfortable and safe living environment.

06

Q & A

Q

What is the difference between management fee and contingency reserve fund contribution?

A

The management fee is a monthly payment covering expenses for routine management activities, such as daily cleaning, facility inspection and personnel expenses for management. This can be considered the daily operating cost for maintaining the quality of the living environment.

Meanwhile, the contingency reserve fund contribution is a monthly fixed payment to set aside funds for future repair work based on the long-term repair plan.

Owners of condominium units are obliged to pay the management fee and contingency reserve fund contribution to the condominium management association. Paying daily operating expenses and accumulating a contingency reserve fund without fail are indispensable for maintaining the safety, comfort and asset value of the condominium over the long term.

Q

Are management fees and contingency reserve fund contributions refundable?

A

Each condominium establishes its own condominium association bylaws based on the Model Condominium Association Bylaws template created by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT). MLIT's template stipulates that building unit owners cannot demand the return of management fees or contingency

reserve fund contributions they have paid. This is to ensure the financial stability of the condominium management association and the smooth execution of common area repair work based on the long-term repair plan.

Please note that MLIT's Model Condominium Association Bylaws merely serve as a template. For details, consult the condominium association bylaws of your condominium.

Q

How should building unit owners residing outside Japan participate in condominium management?

A

Owners of condominium units who do not maintain a residence or domicile within Japan, such as overseas real estate investors or foreign nationals who own them as their vacation home, may find it difficult to personally fulfill the responsibilities of building unit owners related to condominium management as outlined above. In such cases, starting April 2026, building unit owners residing overseas may appoint a person with an address or place of residence in Japan as a "domestic manager" to act on their behalf.

The domestic manager may exercise voting rights on behalf of a building unit owner at general meetings of the condominium management association and pay management fees for common areas. By appointing a domestic manager, such as a relative, acquaintance, or lawyer in Japan who can communicate with the condominium management association and other building unit owners, you can remain closely involved in the management of your condominium, even indirectly.

Q

Can I operate "minpaku" in my condominium?

A

If you intend to operate "minpaku" (private lodging business) using the exclusive use portion of the condominium you purchased, you must first check the condominium association bylaws. If prohibited by the condominium association bylaws, you may not operate "minpaku". Furthermore, even if the condominium association bylaws do not explicitly prohibit "minpaku," you must confirm that the intention of the condominium management association is not to prohibit "minpaku".

Additionally, you must comply with local laws related to the private lodging business when operating "minpaku", including the Private Lodging Business Act and exceptions to the Hotel Business Act under the Act on National Strategic Special Zones. Please be aware that violating these rules may result in administrative penalties.

07

Conclusion

Was this brochure helpful? Condominium management by building unit owners is an essential system that allows every resident to live together with peace of mind. In Japan, building unit owners maintain a comfortable living environment through cooperation and by observing the rules. It is fundamental for every resident to pay the necessary management fees and contingency reserve fund contributions, adhere to the condominium association bylaws and practice good manners in order for diverse people with different cultures and lifestyles to live comfortably in a condominium in Japan. By correctly understanding the condominium association bylaws of your condominium and actively participating in its management, a better community can be built. Your responsible actions are the key to protecting the value of your home into the future.



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