

CITY AND COUNTY OF DENVER		POLICY	DENVER FIRE DEPARTMENT
<b>Subject:</b>	VACANT, IDLE OR ABANDONED PROPERTY OR BUILDING SLATED FOR DEMOLITION		
<b>Reference:</b>	2016 Denver Fire Code; 2015 NFPA		
<b>Approved:</b>	 Division Chief, Fire Prevention Division		
<b>Number:</b>	DFC Sect 105, 3.11 NFPA Sect 10.13	<b>Effective Date:</b> May 9, 2019	Page 1 of 5

**This policy is meant to provide basic information for the most common conditions and situations. In any given occupancy, many other Fire Code requirements may be enforced. The Fire Inspector will address these during a premise inspection. Questions can be addressed by contacting the Fire Prevention Division between 7:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday at 720-913-3474. Walk-in hours are 7:00 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. ONLY, Monday - Friday at 745 W. Colfax Ave., 1<sup>st</sup> Floor.**

## **I. General Information**

The purpose of this policy and the associated Denver Fire Department program is to increase awareness of the hazards that vacant, idle or abandoned buildings and buildings slated for demolition pose, and to protect people from injury and loss of life and property as a result of those hazards. Materials developed through this program are geared toward the safety of firefighters who may be called upon to respond to emergency incidents at such properties and the reduction of incendiary fires involving such properties. Materials developed as part of the program have proven valuable to other City agencies and community leaders in addressing these types of properties and the hazards they present.

Vacant, idle and abandoned structures and structures slated for demolition are unsightly, attract criminal activity, and are a threat to public safety. National Fire Protection Association statistics show that more than 10 civilians die and 6,000 firefighters are injured while conducting emergency operations in these properties every year. National Fire Protection Association statistics also show that more firefighters are injured while operating at incidents involving vacant or abandoned properties than in any other property classification. Unoccupied properties that are secure and well maintained do not pose such a high level of threat to public safety as properties that are open to unauthorized access.

## **II. Collecting Property Data**

The Denver Fire Department must be provided with basic information regarding the property. A current Denver Fire Department permit is required for any vacant, idle or abandoned building. There may be times when the Fire Department's first contact with vacant, idle or abandoned property may be an incident or event involving the building. In that event, the incident commander will have to gather as much of the basic information as possible. The incident commander or his/her representative shall collect essential information regarding the unoccupied property. In collecting this information, the Denver Fire Department is looking for obvious indications of problems involving the site, the building and its contents to:

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- A. Determine that the building is secure.
- B. Identify hazards that require immediate corrective action.
- C. Evaluate the fire growth potential of the building.
- D. Evaluate the potential for structural collapse
- E. Identify conditions that could be hazardous to emergency personnel (Fire, Police) entering the building under emergency conditions, such as:
  1. Limited emergency vehicular access to building(s)
  2. Unstable structure
  3. Maze-like room configuration
  4. Blocked or missing stairs
  5. Unprotected holes or shafts
  6. Fall and trip hazards
  7. Standing water in basements
  8. Vermin and potentially dangerous animals
  9. Hazardous materials abandoned on the property
  10. Unauthorized occupants
  11. Ongoing criminal activity in or adjacent to the property

If there is a condition in the structure that may be hazardous to Denver Fire or Police personnel, that condition(s) must be corrected immediately, if possible, or information about that condition posted within the structure to alert safety personnel.

### III. **Building Security**

While an unoccupied property is waiting for demolition or re-use, it must be properly secured to prevent unauthorized entry.

All openings in the basement, first-floor doors and windows, and any point of entry accessible from a porch, fire escape or other potential climbing point shall be barricaded with half-inch plywood, 2x4 braces, carriage bolt sets and nails. Particle board, wafer board, Masonite, or other similar material shall not be used for purposed of boarding up a building.

Openings that are at least 10 feet from ground level and that are not accessible from a porch, fire escape, roof, or other climbing point may be secured with nails in each brace, and every 12 inches around the perimeter. For all openings, the plywood should be fitted so that it rests snugly against the exterior frame, butting up to the siding on wood-frame buildings and up to the brick molding edge on brick buildings. It may be necessary to remove the staff bead so this fit can be flush and tight.

Overhead doors must have locks placed through the rails to prevent their being pried open. If security systems were in place prior to the vacancy, it is recommended these remain in place and operational, at least for all accessible perimeter access points. Lighting is also important to security. Exterior lighting should be maintained along with interior lighting at points of the structure(s) that can be viewed from the public way as an additional deterrent to unauthorized entry. A Denver Fire Department key box may be required to provide access for emergency response.

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Following board-up, a six-foot chain link fence shall be erected to completely encircle the building(s). The structure(s) shall be posted with NO TRESPASSING signs.

#### **IV. Utilities**

The status of the utilities connected to the building must be determined. The importance of collecting information regarding utilities is to determine if these are potential sources of ignition in the building from heating or power distribution systems and to document the location of devices that responding firefighters can use to control the utilities.

#### **V. Fire Protection Systems**

Denver's Fire Code requires that the building's fire standpipe and fire sprinkler systems (where installed) be maintained by the property owner. The only exception is if the structure is of non-combustible or fire-resistive construction and all combustible storage and interior finish has been removed. When fire sprinkler protection is provided, heat must be provided for the building. A minimum of 40 degrees Fahrenheit must be maintained in all areas unless the fire sprinkler systems are dry-type systems, in which case just the valve enclosure(s) needs to be provided with heat. Fire sprinkler water flow alarms must continue in service. All alarm systems must be monitored by a central station licensed by the Denver Fire Department or by a Denver Fire Department radio transmitter.

If the structure(s) is provided with thermal or smoke detection, these systems must remain except in the case, noted above, when the structure is of non-combustible or fire-resistive construction and there are no combustible interior finishes or materials stored in the structure(s). Where smoke detection is provided, heat must be provided for the building. A minimum of 40 degrees Fahrenheit must be maintained in all areas where smoke detection is present.

#### **VI. Security Visits to Premises**

Minimum visits to the property must be made with the frequency recommended by the Insurance Underwriters Association in the following table.

<b>\$0 - \$1 million property value</b>	<b>\$1 - \$5 million property value</b>	<b>&gt;\$5 million property value</b>
Minimum weekly	2-3 times per week	4-5 times per week

Prior to entering the building, a complete tour of the exterior of the structure(s) should be completed, noting any vandalism or attempts at entry into the building. If entry has been made, contact the Denver Police Department prior to entering the structure.

It is important the visits be thorough and documented and not just a drive-by, which will not reveal the conditions inside the structure(s).

The interior tour of the building must include all areas.

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The roof must be included in the tour to evaluate any potential exposures. These conditions can include clogged roof drains, rooftop structure damage from recent storms, or evidence of unauthorized access via roof hatches, skylights or stairwell doors.

## VII. Placarding

Any vacant or abandoned buildings or structures determined to be unsafe shall be marked.

- A. Placards shall be applied on the front of the structure and be visible from the street. Additional placards shall be applied to the side of each entrance to the structure and on penthouses.
- B. Placards shall be 24 inches by 24 inches minimum in size with a red background, white reflective stripes and a white reflective border. The stripes and border shall have a 2-inch minimum stroke
- C. Placards shall bear the date of their application to the building and the date of the most recent inspection
  1. **A placard with an open square** shall signify that the building had normal structural conditions at the date of the inspection.
  2. **A placard with a single diagonal slash** shall signify that there are interior hazards to the structure and that interior firefighting operations should be conducted with extreme caution.
  3. **A placard with an "X" in the square** shall signify that there are significant structural deficiencies within the building, limiting firefighting to exterior operations only, "...with entry only occurring for known life hazards"
  4. Vacant marker hazard identification symbols: The following symbols shall be used to designate known hazards on the vacant building marker. They shall be placed directly above the symbol.
    - a. **R/O- Roof Open**
    - b. **S/M -Stairs, steps and landing missing**
    - c. **F/E -Avoid Fire Escapes**
    - d. **H/F-Holes in floor**

## VIII. Denver Fire Department Permit

A Denver Fire Department permit is required for any idle, vacant or abandoned structure. All conditions of the permit must be complied with at all times. Failure to comply with conditions of the permit will result in revocation of the permit and immediate legal action.

For any questions or to apply for a permit, please contact the Denver Fire Department Fire Prevention office at 720-913-3474.

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**Permit Application**

**Vacant, Idle or Abandoned Property or Building Slated for Demolition or Remodel**  
**Denver Fire Department**

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Property Name \_\_\_\_\_

Property owner name \_\_\_\_\_

Property owner address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

**Building Security**

- Secure                       Open/unsecured

**Active Utilities**

- No             Yes            If Yes:    gas             electricity             water

**Building Information**

Number of floors \_\_\_\_\_ Basement:    Yes             multiple basement levels

**Construction Type**

- Non-combustible             Fire-resistive             Combustible

**Fire Protection System(s)**

- |                                   |                              |                             |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Operational Fire Alarm System     | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Operational Fire Sprinkler System | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Operational Fire Standpipe System | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Fire Department Connection        | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

Location \_\_\_\_\_

Central Station Monitoring Agency    Yes             No

Name of Monitoring Agency \_\_\_\_\_

**Fire Department Operations**

Hazards in Building(s)                       Yes             No

Describe \_\_\_\_\_

Fire Department Vehicular Access:

- 4 sides             3 sides             2 sides             Limited

Interior:                       open                       walls/partitions

Stairways:                       accessible                       not accessible

Public fire hydrant on property:             Yes             No

Hydrant locations \_\_\_\_\_