

SAMPLE

This is a sample policy. Modify/change the policy to meet local needs.

For more information on the risk to firefighters from vacant and unsafe buildings refer to the *NIOSH Alert: Preventing Deaths and Injuries of Fire Fighters using Risk Management Principles at Structure Fires* found at this link: <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2010-153/>

Vacant and Unsafe Structures SOP

PURPOSE

Fire fighters are often killed or injured when fighting fires in abandoned, vacant, and unoccupied structures. These structures pose additional and sometimes unique risks due to the potential for fire fighters to encounter unexpected and unsafe building conditions such as dilapidation, decay, damage from previous fires and vandals, and other factors such as uncertain occupancy status. Risk management principles must be applied at all structure fires to ensure the appropriate strategy and tactics are used based on the fireground conditions encountered. The Vacant and Unsafe Structure Placard Program has been developed to educate the fire and rescue department personnel on the standard marking system used by the <Anytown> Fire Department. This marking system alerts responding fire and rescue personnel of the potential danger and/or associated risks that might exist within a specific structure.

SCOPE

This policy will apply to all vacant and abandoned buildings within the fire department's jurisdiction.

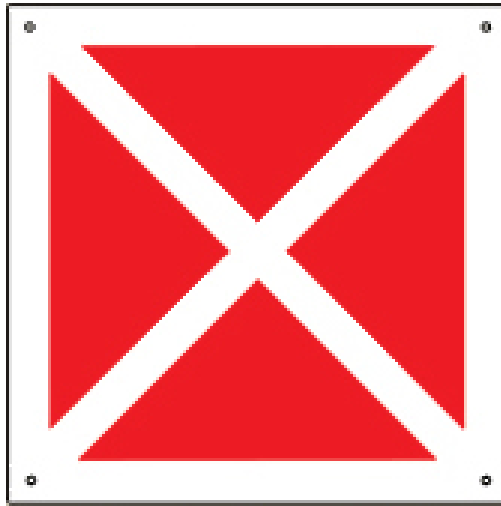
POLICY

It shall be policy that ALL fire department personnel be familiar with the visual appearance and meaning of the "Vacant and Unsafe Structure" placard to improve firefighter safety as well as situational awareness in assisting firefighters in tactical decision making while operating on an incident scene as well as understand the following:

1. Any vacant or abandoned buildings or structures determined to be unsafe pursuant to Section 110 of the International Fire Code (note: replace this authority reference with the appropriate locally adopted code if it is difference from the IFC) relating to structural or interior hazards shall be placarded.
2. Placards will be applied to the address side of the structure and be visible from the street. Additional placards may be placed at all exterior entry doors

and may be applied to other sides of the structure as needed to insure adequate identification of the structure as being unsafe.

3. The placard symbol shall mean that structural or interior hazards exist to a degree that limits firefighting activity to exterior operations only, with entry only occurring for **known life hazards**.
4. Placards shall be 24 inches by 24 inches minimum in size with a red background, white reflective "X" stripe and a white reflective border. The "X" stripes and border shall be 2-inch minimum width. The design of the placards shall use the following symbol:



5. Placards shall bear the date of their application to the building and the date of the most recent inspection.
6. The use of this symbol shall be informational only and shall not in any way limit the discretion of the on-scene incident commander.
7. In the event that fire and rescue personnel respond to any structure not already placarded and question its integrity or safety, contact the Fire Marshal as soon as possible so the appropriate actions can be taken to correct any hazards.
8. Personnel shall announce via radio communication the recognition of a placarded building upon arrival to an incident so all units are aware of the situation.
9. Communications shall broadcast the information over the radio to all responding companies and resources that the building is placarded as a vacant and unsafe building.