



# SOUTH LYON FIRE DEPARTMENT

## Manual of Procedures 415

### UNSAFE STRUCTURE WARNING PLACARDS

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#### I. PURPOSE

Numerous vacant and abandoned structures exist throughout the city. The fire department recognizes the inherent dangers and the increased risk to firefighters operating in these structures. The 2006 International Fire Code® outlines the installation of a placard on vacant or abandoned structures to signify a warning to firefighters.

#### II. DEFINITIONS

Abandoned Structure – “to desert, surrender, forsake or cede.” Typically one with no viable owner or one with an absentee landlord. These structures are usually neglected without any effort to preserve its value or condition.

Vacant Structure – “empty, unoccupied.” Typically, a vacant structure will have a viable owner that has interest in the wellbeing of the property, but no permanent occupants.

"Evidence of vacancy" means any condition that on its own or combined with other conditions present would lead a reasonable person to believe the structure is vacant. Such conditions include, but are not limited to, no or significantly below standard utility usage, overgrown and/or dead vegetation, accumulation of newspapers, circulars, flyers and/or mail, accumulation of trash, junk, and/or debris, broken or boarded up windows, abandoned vehicles, automobile parts or materials, the absence of window coverings, such as curtains, blinds, and/or shutters, the absence of furnishings and/or personal items consistent with habitation or occupation, statement(s) by neighboring property owners, delivery persons, U.S. Postal service employees, and/or governmental employee(s) that the structure is vacant.

#### III. UNSAFE CONDITIONS

Vacant and abandoned structures present a threat to firefighters. Uninhabited structures have a high probability of intentionally set fires and attract criminal activity including “urban mining,” which could be defined as the intentional removal of structure systems, equipment, wiring, piping and structural elements. In addition, the deterioration of the structure due to exposure to the weather and/or age may weaken the structure causing rapid failure early in a fire. As the structures are uninhabited, fires can develop for a significant period of time before they are detected and reported. Vacant and abandoned structures may also contain hazardous materials and a significant amount of combustible fuel loads inside.

With firefighter safety in mind, the fire department has enacted a system in which vacant and abandoned structures can be evaluated and marked with a placard to alert emergency response personnel to hazards that may exist at the property.



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Structures that are unsafe or deficient because of inadequate means of egress or which constitute a fire hazard, or are otherwise dangerous to human life or the public welfare, or which involve illegal or improper occupancy or inadequate maintenance, shall be deemed an unsafe condition. A vacant structure which is not secured against unauthorized entry as shall be deemed unsafe.

#### **IV. PLACARDS**

Any structure determined to be unsafe shall be marked with a placard. Placards shall be applied on the front of the structure and be visible from the street. Additional placards shall be applied to the back of the structure. Placards shall be 12 inches by 12 inches in size with a red background, white stripes and a white border. Placards shall bear the date of their application to the structure and the date of the most recent inspection.



This symbol shall mean that structural or interior hazards exist and interior firefighting or rescue operations should be conducted with extreme caution. The use of this symbol shall be informational only and shall not in any way limit the discretion of the on-scene incident commander.

Approved by  
/s/ Chief Mike Kennedy