

BULLETIN

NO: 24-047
DATE: March 20, 2024
TO: All Personnel
FROM: David Gerboth, Assistant Fire Chief, Emergency Operations
SUBJECT: Operations Manual Update #24-07, SI 04.05 Vacant and Unsafe Buildings

Attached to this bulletin, please find Operations Manual Update 24-07, Standard Instruction 04 Community Risk Reduction, Section 05 Vacant and Unsafe Buildings. All company officers are directed to ensure that personnel under their command are briefed on these revisions and comply.

The purpose of this policy is to establish procedures to mitigate vacant or unsafe buildings or structures that pose an immediate life safety hazard or constitute a threat to public health, safety, and welfare.

This is a new policy.

The Operations Manual will be updated electronically in the "M" drive and in the 'Quick Links' section of Vector Solutions.

Any questions regarding this policy can be directed through your chain of command.

TITLE OPERATIONS MANUAL	STANDARD INSTRUCTION 04		DEPARTMENT FIRE-RESCUE
SUBJECT VACANT AND UNSAFE BUILDINGS	SECTION 05	PAGE 1 of 4	EFFECTIVE DATE March 19,2024

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish procedures to mitigate vacant or unsafe buildings or structures that pose an immediate life safety hazard or constitute a threat to public health, safety, and welfare.

II. SCOPE

This policy applies to all sworn San Diego Fire-Rescue Personnel (SDFD), excluding Life-guard personnel.

III. AUTHORITY

The Fire Chief authorizes this policy.

IV. POLICY

This policy shall be used by SDFD Fire Captains, Battalion Chiefs (BC) and Shift Commanders encountering buildings or structures determined to be a public nuisance. San Diego Municipal Code§54.1204 authorizes the Fire Chief to designate personnel from SDFD to abate unsecured buildings and structures. Officers shall notify Community Risk Reduction Division (CRRD) for assistance in coordinating immediate actions necessary to preserve or protect public health or safety from unsafe conditions associated with the building.

A. Unsafe Buildings

1. Following an emergency incident, the Company Officer or BC will make the initial assessment to determine if the building has any [unsafe conditions](#) or can be reoccupied.
 - i. In the case of multi-family dwellings with single-unit involvement, it is possible to have an unsafe condition(s) in one or more units and still have occupiable units.
2. If the BC or Company Officer is unable to determine if the building can be occupied they will request a “Structural Assessment” from the Development Services Department (DSD) through the Emergency Command and Data Center (ECDC).
 - i. Urgent Request – Immediate Need. Incident Commander will remain at scene until arrival of DSD staff.
 - ii. Non-urgent – response within 24 hours, structure can be secured.
 - iii. The BC or Company Officer can request a consult with the Duty Fire Marshal, through the ECDC.
 - iv. The BC should complete the Red Tag procedure if appropriate.

B. Red Tag Procedure

TITLE OPERATIONS MANUAL	STANDARD INSTRUCTION 04		DEPARTMENT FIRE-RESCUE
SUBJECT VACANT AND UNSAFE BUILDINGS	SECTION 05	PAGE 2 of 4	EFFECTIVE DATE March 19,2024

1. The BC can make the determination to deem a building as unsafe and affix a “Red Tag” notice and order.
2. The Red Tag is to be affixed to the building or structure in a visible location and at all points of entry.
3. The BC will sign the Red Tag in black permanent marker.
4. The California Fire Code (CFC) Reference “*CFC. 114*” (California Code of Regulations, Title 24, Part 9) will be written in the Code Reference area.
 - i. CFC. 114 - An [Unsafe Condition](#) Exists. An immediate Evacuation Order of the premises is in place. “No one shall enter or re-enter until authorized by the San Diego Fire-Rescue Department”
5. Notify the Duty Fire Marshal with the following information:
 - i. Name/Rank
 - ii. Contact Information
 - iii. Address
 - iv. Type of property (residential/commercial/stories)
 - v. Any available property contact information
 - vi. Photos of the exterior of the address side of the building
 - vii. Photos of any potential hazards such as structural concerns, electrical hazards, or breached openings

The Duty Fire Marshal will determine the appropriate placard and add property to Red Tag properties in the CRRD Database.

C. Requesting Board Up Service

1. Attempt to contact the property owner or responsible building representative to respond and take possession of the property. The property owner may work with their insurance provider to secure the structure. SDPD may assist with owner contact information.
2. If unable to contact a property owner or responsible party within thirty minutes (additional time can be allowed with discretion of the BC) the BC may contact ECDC and request board up services.
3. IC will remain on scene until the unsecured property is turned over to a building owner/representative, SDPD, or an authorized private contractor.
4. It is imperative that members of the Department do not direct non-contracted vendors to board and secure unsecured buildings.
5. If an unsecured structure is located on property owned by a local public entity other than the City of San Diego, a contracted board up company may be utilized ONLY with the consent of an authorized representative of the public entity having jurisdiction over the property.

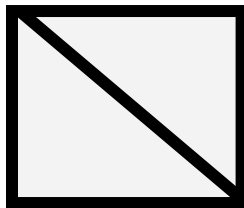
D. Placarding

TITLE OPERATIONS MANUAL	STANDARD INSTRUCTION 04		DEPARTMENT FIRE-RESCUE
SUBJECT VACANT AND UNSAFE BUILDINGS	SECTION 05	PAGE 3 of 4	EFFECTIVE DATE March 19, 2024

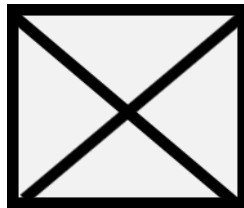
1. The design of the placards shall use the following symbols:
 - i. This symbol shall mean that the structure had normal structural conditions at the time of marking.



- ii. This symbol shall mean that structural or interior hazards exist, and interior firefighting or rescue operations should be conducted with extreme caution.



- iii. This symbol shall mean that structural or interior hazards exist to a degree that consideration should be given to limiting firefighting to exterior operations only, with entry only occurring for known life hazards.



2. 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.

- i. **R/O** — Roof open
- ii. **S/M** — Stairs, steps, and landing missing
- iii. **F/E** — Avoid fire escapes.
- iv. **H/F** — Holes in floor

- The use of these symbols shall be informational only and shall not in any way limit the discretion of the on-scene Incident Commander.

TITLE OPERATIONS MANUAL	STANDARD INSTRUCTION 04		DEPARTMENT FIRE-RESCUE
SUBJECT VACANT AND UNSAFE BUILDINGS	SECTION 05	PAGE 4 of 4	EFFECTIVE DATE March 19,2024

E. Notifications

1. The Assistant Fire Marshal will placard the building and make the following notifications:
 - i. SDPD for securing the structure and illegal activity
 - ii. Building Land Use Enforcement (BLUE) for any violations
 - iii. City Attorney Public Nuisance Abatement Unit
 - iv. Homeless Strategies and Solutions
 - v. Contact ECDC that a vacant or unsecured building has been placarded

V. **DEFINITIONS**

- A. **Unsafe Building Conditions**: Buildings that have become unsafe, unsanitary, or deficient because of inadequate maintenance, means of egress, lighting, ventilation, or illegal, improper occupancy, constitute a fire hazard, danger to human life, or the public welfare. Vacant and abandoned premises and occupiable buildings with unsafe conditions shall be red-tagged and deemed unsafe, boarded up, secured, made safe, rehabilitated, and/or demolished. [RETURN](#)