

No Interior Fire Attack Policy

04.02

Purpose

The purpose of this Policy to provide for the safety, health, protection and general welfare of public safety personnel and the citizen's of the City of Concord by requiring vacant, abandoned, and unsafe buildings to be repaired, secured or demolished and removed.

Vacant and abandoned buildings not properly secured at doorways and windows serve as an attractive nuisance for young children who may be injured therein, tend to attract persons intent on criminal activity such as the illicit sale of drugs, and serve as a point of congregation by vagrants and transients. A dilapidated building may also serve as a place of rodent and/or insect infestation, thereby creating a health menace to the community.

Buildings and structures may become unsafe by reason of damage by fire, vandalism, neglect, age, the elements or general deterioration. Debris, rubble or parts of buildings left on the ground and not removed constitute a dangerous, unhealthy and unsightly condition.

Furthermore, unsafe buildings pose a threat to the lives and safety of firefighters, law enforcement and other emergency services personnel dispatched to control fire, rescue and law enforcement incidents occurring within these structures.

Definitions

As used in this policy, the following terms shall have the meanings indicated:

ABANDONED BUILDING – A building or structure that has been deserted, forsaken or ceded where no viable owner or an absentee landlord can be identified and/or contacted.

BUILDING/STRUCTURE- Any buildings, mobile home, structure or portion thereof used for residential, business, commercial, industrial, recreational or other purpose.

CODE ENFORCEMENT OFFICER/INSPECTOR - The Code Enforcement Officer of the City of Concord or such other person appointed by the City of Concord to enforce the provisions of Article IV - Chapter 14 of the City of Concord Ordinances, North Carolina General Statutes (N.C.G.S.) and North Carolina Fire Prevention Code.

PORTION OF BUILDING OR STRUCTURE - Any debris, rubble or parts of buildings which remain on the ground or on the premises after demolition, reconstruction, fire or other casualty:

UNSAFE BUILDING OR STRUCTURE - Any building, structure or portion thereof which:

1. Because of its structural condition is or may become dangerous or unsafe to the public;
2. Is open at the doorways, windows or walls making it an object of attraction to minors under 18 years of age as well as to vagrants and other trespassers;
3. Is or may become a place of rodent or insect infestation;
4. Consists of debris, rubble or parts of buildings left on the ground after demolition, reconstruction, fire or other casualty;

5. Presents any other danger to the health, safety, and general welfare of the public.

VACANT BUILDING - A building or structure that is unoccupied where a viable owner (i.e. one that is interested in the property) can be easily identified and contacted.

Maintenance of Buildings and Structures

It shall be unlawful for any owner, tenant or occupant of any building or structure or portion of any building or structure in the City of Concord to maintain such building or structure or portion of any building or structure in any condition or manner which shall be unsafe Article IV - Chapter 14 of the City of Concord Ordinances, North Carolina General Statutes (N.C.G.S.) and North Carolina Fire Prevention Code.

Procedure

This policy may be instituted in cases where the following instances, conditions and/or circumstances exist. This is included but not limited to;

1. Citizen complaint,
2. Private enterprise complaint,
3. Other municipal or government entity referral,
4. Periodic fire inspection,
5. Emergency incident or natural disaster,
6. Any imminent hazard that endangers the health and/or welfare of the general public.

Upon policy institution, the Fire Marshal's Office shall record all information pertaining to the complaint. The following minimum information shall be obtained:

1. The name, address and affiliation of the party reporting the complaint;
2. The name, address, phone number and any other information pertaining to the address of the complaint;
3. The conditions observed by the party they believe to indicate the structure or structures are unsafe;
4. Any owner or occupant information if known.

Once the above information has been obtained the Fire Marshal's Office shall notify the City of Concord Code Enforcement and Cabarrus County Building Inspections Department of the complaint and assign the investigation of the complaint to a Fire Marshal's Office Inspector.

Upon being assigned, the inspector shall begin an investigation of the incident. The inspector shall follow the requirements set forth in this policy.

Inspection Protocol

The inspector shall attempt to contact the property owner/representative and notify them of the complaint (N.C.G.S. 160A-443). If contact is made, the inspector shall request an appointment to conduct an inspection of the property. The City of Concord Code Enforcement and Cabarrus County Building Inspections Department shall be notified of the date of the inspection and a Building Inspector shall be requested to be present at the time of inspection.

1. If possible, the property owner or representative shall accompany the inspector during the inspection.
2. If permission to conduct the inspection is refused, an Administrative Search Warrant shall be procured and duly served prior to the inspection (N.C.G.S. 15-27.2).

Upon arrival the inspector shall:

1. Meet with the property owner or representative and request permission to enter the building/structure and conduct an inspection,
 - A. If possible, the property owner or representative shall accompany the inspector during the inspection.
 - B. If permission to conduct the inspection is refused, an Administrative Search Warrant shall be procured and duly served prior to the inspection (N.C.G.S. 15-27.2).
2. Dress in the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) needed to ensure personal protection during the investigation. PPE may include hardhat, eye protection and/or gloves to safeguard the inspector from an injury during the inspection,
3. Use nationally recognized practices in the conduction of the investigation of the complaint,
4. Document any deficiencies, hazards or unsafe conditions found during the inspection. Suggest proper methods and alternative methods to correct deficiencies, hazards or unsafe conditions shall also be thoroughly explained,
5. Utilize the Fire Marshal's Office inspection form to record any deficiencies, hazards or unsafe conditions found during the inspection.
6. Utilize photographs and photo logs to adequately supplement documentation of the inspected property,
7. Upon completion of the inspection, notify, in writing, the property representative of findings of fact,
8. The notice of findings and facts shall include: notice of the unsafe conditions, time period for which these items must be corrected, penalties for enforcement and notice of subsequent appeal procedures,
9. Ask owner or representative to sign the inspection form at the end of the inspection. Leave a copy of the inspection form with the owner/representative. If the owner/ representative refuse to sign the inspection form, the inspector shall note the refusal on the form and leave a copy.

If the property owner or representative cannot be identified or contact cannot be made the inspector shall attempt to notify the property owner or representative by registered mail. If an owner or representative cannot be identified or found the inspector shall:

1. Obtain and serve an Administrative Search Warrant at the building/structure. The search warrant shall be obtained and served in accordance with N.C.G.S. 15-27.2,
2. Upon the serving of the Administrative Search Warrant, the inspector shall conduct the inspection in accordance with items 2-8 above,
3. The inspector shall notify, in writing, the property owner or representative by registered mail of the findings of fact,
4. If the property owner or representative cannot be identified or contacted and the building/structure cannot be repaired, secured or demolished, it shall be condemned. An additional registered letter shall be mailed to the property owner or representative outlining the findings of fact and the procedures to be followed during the condemnation proceedings,
5. Condemnation proceedings shall follow the requirements outlined in City Ordinance Article IV, Sections 14-85 through 14-94.

Vacant and abandoned buildings/structures shall be secured in accordance with North Carolina Fire Prevention Code Section 311 and the methods employed to secure such buildings shall be consistent with the methods outlined in the International Association of Arson Investigators/United States Fire Administration Abandoned Building Project Booklet. Upon request, a copy of the International Association of Arson Investigators/United States Fire Administration Abandoned Building Project Booklet shall be made available to the building/structure owner or representative.

If the structure, portion of a structure, wiring or HVAC system is found to be condemnable, the building(s) shall be deemed to be an Unsafe Building or Structure pursuant to N.C.G.S.160A-426 and the inspector shall affix, in a conspicuous location, a "No Interior Fire Attack" sign to the exterior of the building. If necessary, the inspector shall affix several signs in conspicuous locations on the building exterior to alert firefighters of the hazardousness of the structure.

If the building is vacant and/or abandoned, Section 308.2 of the North Carolina Administrative Enforcement Code authorizes the inspector to disconnect utilities to any building(s) deemed to be an Unsafe Structure. The owner/representative shall be notified of the decision to disconnect electrical service utilities. The City Electrical Department shall also be notified of the decision to disconnect electrical service utilities.

If any occupant fails to comply with an order to vacate a *residential dwelling*, the inspector may file a civil action in the name of the city to remove such occupant. The action to vacate the dwelling shall be in the nature of summary ejectment and shall be commenced by filing a complaint naming as parties-defendant any person occupying such dwelling. An action to remove an occupant of a dwelling who is a tenant of the owner may not be in the nature of a summary ejectment proceeding unless such occupant was served with notice at least 30 days before the filing of the summary ejectment proceeding (N.C.G.S. 160A-443 (7)).

The condemnation of structures located within the City Limits of Concord shall be jointly enforced by the Concord Fire Marshal's Office, City of Concord Code Enforcement and the Cabarrus County Building Inspections Department. Condemnation enforcement procedures by the Fire Marshal's Office shall be enforced by City Ordinance Article IV, Sections 14-85 through 14-94.

Records and Reports

The inspector shall document the condition of the structure by filling out a "Vacant/Abandoned Building Evaluation Form". The completed form shall be placed in the Occupancy Master File for the structure. All notes, paperwork, photo logs, 35mm photos or digital photo storage media, inspection forms, search warrant forms any other paper files are to be sent to the Fire Marshal's Office for storage.

A record of the inspection shall be entered into the Firehouse Software Occupancy Module and any digital photos and/or other digital documentation shall be placed on the Investig8 server folder. A photo log for all 35mm and digital photos shall be documented in the Investig8 server folder.

Inspection reports and other associated documentation shall be submitted as soon as possible, but no more than three days from the time of the date of inspection. Inspectors will be responsible for conducting any follow up inspections as needed.

Upon identification of a building/structure deemed "No Interior Fire Attack", Concord Emergency Communications shall be notified by the Fire Marshal's Office of the posting. This notification shall be entered into the CAD premises information for the building/structure address.

Copies of the "Vacant/Abandoned Building Evaluation Form", photographs and other documentation of the buildings/structures deemed as "No Interior Fire Attack" shall be forwarded by the Fire Marshal's Office to the Fire Operations Division of the Fire Department and Concord Police Department.

The Fire Operations Division shall ensure that all suppression personnel are properly informed of buildings/structures determined to be "No Interior Fire Attack".

Communications shall notify responding responders of a "No Interior Fire Attack" designation upon dispatch to a building/structure that has been deemed "No Interior Fire Attack".

Emergency Guidelines

Emergency Operations For Buildings/Structures as Defined:

1. Vacant Building/Structure
2. Abandoned Building/Structure
3. "No Interior Fire Attack"

It is without question that life safety is the highest priority given to any emergency operation. It is with this concern that **Incident Commanders** must evaluate the risk versus benefit in formulating their **Action Plan**. Buildings/ structures that are **vacant, abandoned,** or designated “**No Interior Fire Attack**” will usually have a low potential for civilian victims and a high injury risk to firefighters. Therefore, **Incident Commanders** must take in account the safety of all personnel at the fire scene. Interior operations are not mandated in these types of properties. Entry should be an option, not an obligation.

1. Vacant Building/Structure

Personnel arriving **First On-Scene** and assuming the role of **Incident Command (IC)** of a vacant building/structure in reference to actual reports of fire or fire alarm activations should consider the following in the mitigation of these type incidents.

When personnel establish command at vacant buildings/structures an immediate assessment of the property should begin. This assessment, along with sound tactical judgment should assist in formulating an **Action Plan** with direct consideration of the properties structural integrity and overall condition. Consideration should include, but not limited to:

- a. Age of Building
- b. Type of Construction
- c. Obvious Hazards
- d. Risk/Benefit Analysis

If there are **No** visible signs of fire or other hazards, the IC should initiate an investigational approach that utilizes a team or teams of personnel to perform a through walk-around of the building/structure. This course of action will assist the IC in prioritizing the need for physical entry. If the investigation reveals that there are **NO** immediate threats of fire or other life safety concerns, the IC should consider contacting a key holder for entry into the property. If a key holder is unavailable and observation of the building/structure does not reveal conditions necessitating immediate action by life safety personnel, the property should be tagged utilizing a card/note advising the owner/landlord to contact the City of Concord Fire Marshals Office. This should be followed-up by the IC or his designee notifying the Fire Marshals Office via e-mail as soon as possible after returning from the incident. If entry is made, either by the assistance of a key holder or by forcible entry applications, operations on the interior should not be taken lightly. Extreme caution should be exercised at all times. The use of Thermal Imaging Camera's, lighting equipment, ropes, etc. should be considered to perform interior functions. If entry by life safety personnel is initiated, the IC should utilize standard guidelines consistent with the operation of personnel on the interior of buildings/ structures.

Consideration should include, but not limited to:

- a. Accountability
- b. Rapid Intervention
- c. Safety

If upon arrival or during the investigation process the building/structure shows signs of possible or obvious fire conditions, the IC should initiate operations consistent with the strategies and tactics of structural firefighting. These strategies should include all areas discussed previously regarding a buildings/structures over-all condition and structural integrity. All standard-operating guidelines regarding safe fire ground operations should be strictly adhered. This includes the option of establishing a **Defensive Mode of Fire Attack** if conditions warrant.

It shall be the IC's option as to the commitment of life safety personnel to interior operations on vacant buildings/structures. This decision should be based on sound judgment of the Risk/Benefit analysis. A common sense approach should support that **"If It Doesn't Look Safe, It Probably Isn't"**

Response notification of essential personnel i.e.; Fire Investigator, Safety, EMS, Police, etc. should be consistent with **"Working Fire" Standard Operating Guidelines**. Notification of the property owner or responsible party should be initiated as soon as possible after operations have begun.

Upon arrival of the property owner or responsible party, all pertinent information concerning the building/structures condition, contents, and possible hazards should be ascertained and assessed. This information should be forwarded to the on-call investigator upon their arrival.

Should a non-fire related call for service involve a building/structure that appears to be abandoned or vacant and conditions portray obvious or possible safety concerns, notification should be made to the Fire Marshal's office as soon as possible after returning from the incident via e-mail and/or telephone.

2. Abandoned Building/Structure

Abandoned buildings/structures differ greatly from vacant properties. Abandoned as defined has been deserted or forsaken and has no viable owner or landlord. With this understanding it is likely that the conditions in such buildings/structures will be suspect at best. Considering the unlimited hazard potential in this type of property, the IC should initiate strategies and tactics consistent with the operations concerning buildings/structures identified as **"No Interior Fire Attack"**

3. "No Interior Fire Attack" Building/Structure

The most important concept that fire service personnel must understand when responding to fires involving buildings /structures that have been deemed unsafe is that these properties are inherently dangerous. These type properties pose a significant risk to life safety personnel. Identified and unidentified buildings/structures of this type conceal hazards of many forms. Hazards commonly found include:

- . Open Shafts
- . Pits and Holes
- . Structural Degradation
- . Exposed Structural Members
- . Openings in Walls, Floors, and Ceilings that Permit Abnormal Fire Travel
- . Combustible Contents
- . Blocked or Damaged Stairs
- . Maze-Like Configuration
- . Potential for Multi-Room Fires on Arrival
- . Potential for Extension to Near-by Structures

Upon notification by Concord Communications or by visually identifying a building/structure that displays the appropriate markings indicating “**No Interior Fire Attack**” by the authority having jurisdiction, the following guidelines should be considered:

Immediate consideration for the safety, health, protection, and general welfare of all life safety personnel, shareholders of The City of Concord, and the general public should be paramount. The potential for firefighter injuries or fatalities in these type properties are significantly higher than for any other property use. Firefighting operations in and around unsafe buildings should be conducted with extreme caution.

Persons charged with the position of **IC** should initiate strategies and tactics consistent with the **Defensive Mode of Fire Attack**. This should include but not limited to:

- a. Immediate Life Safety Concerns
- b. Adequate Resources
- c. Water Supply
- d. Exposure Protection
- e. Collapse Potential

When the **IC** initiates a Defensive Mode of fire attack, there should be **No** interior search made of that building/structure. All search functions should be conducted from the exterior of the building/structure. When establishing search teams, the following guidelines should be considered:

- a. Continuous Size-up of the Incident Scene
- b. Observe, Monitor, and Update Command on all Safety Area's
- c. Assign Search Teams to Exterior Divisions (A-Alpha, B-Bravo, etc.)
- d. Establish **Rapid Intervention Team(s)**
- e. Ensure Accountability of all Personnel

Teams should conduct searches by use of openings, such as doorways, windows, or other means that will provide observation of the interior of the building/structure without the entry of life safety personnel.

Tools such as Thermal Imaging camera's and lighting equipment should be considered when conducting these types of searches.

In the event that a multiple story building/structure is involved, the use of aerial ladder devices should be considered to affect exterior searches when applicable. The use of aerial devices will allow life safety personnel to view the interior by means of windows or other openings without physical entry.

**** At No time should personnel or apparatus be allowed to operate in an area that poses a potential for collapse. Collapse zones should be established early-on as initial fire companies arrive on scene. All personnel operating on the incident scene should monitor these areas closely and update the Incident Commander accordingly. ****

In the event that a victim has been located, the **IC** should be notified immediately and rescue operations initiated if possible. All attempts at rescue should be conducted with the highest regard to personnel safety. If entry into a building/structure that has been deemed unsafe is required, the **IC** in conjunction with the on scene **Safety Officer** will evaluate and enter into a decision as to the best course of action.

The **Safety Officer** should evaluate and advise the **IC** of the realistic probability of affecting a safe rescue.

Precautions for consideration should include:

- a. Limiting the Amount of Time that Personnel Operate in the Building/Structure.
- b. Providing Specific Tasks and Objectives to Interior Personnel.
- c. Monitoring of Interior Personnel by the Incident Commander and Safety Officer.

All actions conducted upon an incident involving structures of this type shall be conducted according to an established site safety plan. It shall be the responsibility of the **Safety Officer** to enforce the guidelines set forth in the site safety plan. Any deviations from the plan shall be immediately corrected and the abatement actions documented by the **Safety Officer**.

All other incident strategy, tactics and operations shall be conducted according to department guidelines and policies.

No Interior Attack Sign Specification:



N | 2 1/2" to 4" Letters

**CONCORD DEPARTMENT OF FIRE & LIFE SAFETY
VACANT/ABANDONED BUILDING EVALUATION FORM**

Address			
Property Name			
Owner Name		Telephone	
Owner Address			

Answer each of the following questions about the building. Select multiple options, if necessary; explain response. Draw a sketch of the location and explain your observations in a brief narrative.

Building Security

<input type="checkbox"/> Secure	<input type="checkbox"/> Open/unsecure	<input type="checkbox"/> Signs of recent entry
---------------------------------	--	--

Utilities

Active Utilities	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> If Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Gas	<input type="checkbox"/> Elect	<input type="checkbox"/> Oil	<input type="checkbox"/> Water
-------------------------	------------------------------	-----------------------------	---------------------------------	------------------------------	--------------------------------	------------------------------	--------------------------------

Building Use (The original use of the building)

--

Building Construction

<input type="checkbox"/> # of Floors	<input type="checkbox"/> Basement	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Sub basement	<input type="checkbox"/> Multi sub levels
--------------------------------------	-----------------------------------	------------------------------	---------------------------------------	---

Structure Members (Beams, girders, columns)

<input type="checkbox"/> Steel	<input type="checkbox"/> Concrete	<input type="checkbox"/> Wood	<input type="checkbox"/> Mixed (describe)
--------------------------------	-----------------------------------	-------------------------------	---

Truss Construction:	<input type="checkbox"/> Roof	<input type="checkbox"/> Floors
----------------------------	-------------------------------	---------------------------------

Exposed Structural Members (Beams, girders, columns)	<input type="checkbox"/> Roof	<input type="checkbox"/> Floors
---	-------------------------------	---------------------------------

Exterior Walls	<input type="checkbox"/> Block/Brick	<input type="checkbox"/> Curtain Wall	<input type="checkbox"/> Wood	<input type="checkbox"/> Metal Tile Rods(Stairs)
-----------------------	--------------------------------------	---------------------------------------	-------------------------------	--

Openings in Exterior Walls (windows, doors, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Many	<input type="checkbox"/> Few	<input type="checkbox"/> Windowless
--	-------------------------------	------------------------------	-------------------------------------

Ceiling Type:	<input type="checkbox"/> None	<input type="checkbox"/> Suspended	<input type="checkbox"/> Metal	<input type="checkbox"/> Drywall/Plaster	<input type="checkbox"/> Wood
----------------------	-------------------------------	------------------------------------	--------------------------------	--	-------------------------------

Condition of Interior Walls and Floors (Integrity of compartmentation)

<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorating	<input type="checkbox"/> Multiple penetrations that would allow fire spread	<input type="checkbox"/> Walls	<input type="checkbox"/> Floors
-------------------------------	--	---	--------------------------------	---------------------------------

Condition of Roof

<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Some instability/deterioration	<input type="checkbox"/> Major Deterioration
-------------------------------	---	--

General Condition of Structure

<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Some structural instability	<input type="checkbox"/> Major Deterioration of structural elements
-------------------------------	--	---

Fire Protections Systems

Operational Fire Alarm System		Yes		No
Operational Standpipe System		Yes		No
Fire Department Connection (show on sketch)		Yes		No
Operational Sprinkler System (valves open, pressure showing on gauges)		Yes		No
System off, but usable if supplied through FDC.				

Fire Potential (Fuel Load)

Quantity:	Numerous	Moderate	Limited
Distribution	Concentrated	Spread out	
Interior Finish	Combustible	Non-combustible	Mixed(Describe in notes)
Room Size	Large	Moderate	Small
Housekeeping	Good	Poor	
Potential for Delay in Fire Department Notification		Large	Moderate
			Small

Exposures (Note Locations on Sketch)

Location	Alpha	Bravo	Charlie	Delta
Separation (ft)	Division	Division	Division	Division
Occupied (Y/N)				

Suppression Operations

Hazards in Building	Holes in Floors	Missing Stairs	Open shafts/pits
Interior Layout	Complicated	Normal Walls/Partitions	Open

Building Access:	4 Sides	3 Sides	2 Sides	Limited
Water Supply:	Adequate	Inadequate	Note locations on sketch	

Hazardous Materials located on the site: (describe in detail)	Yes	None Observed
Conditions that require immediate correction (describe in detail)	Yes	No
Previous history of fires		

Analysis of the building (provide your analysis of the building)

	High	Moderate	Low
Potential for an exposure fire (extension to other building)			
Potential for a Multi-Room fire on arrival of first due company			
Potential for structural collapse early in the fire development			
Potential for fire fighters to becomes lost or trapped during operations			

Narrative

Prepared By: _____ Date: _____
Inspector

Received By: _____ Date: _____
Bureau Chief of Fire Prevention

Received By: _____ Date: _____
Fire Chief