

S.O.P. #: TACTICAL OPERATIONS MANUAL #27

SUBJECT: ASSESSMENT OF UNSAFE STRUCTURES

DIVISION: EMERGENCY OPERATIONS

Objective: In accordance with the Baltimore County Building Code, Part 121 and the IEBC Section 116; the following are procedures for posting unsafe buildings, structures, or areas and the requirements for follow up notifications.

Section 1 General

A. The Baltimore County Building Official (Building Engineer) authorized the following to post and report unsafe building signage:

1. Chief Officers
2. OIC of USAR 17
3. Acting Battalion Chiefs

B. Specifics of signage:

1. Unsafe Building Signage – (see attached Figure 1). Developed by the County Building Engineer in the Baltimore County Department of Permits, Approval and Inspections (PAI).
 - a. Signs shall be a minimum of 8.5” x 11” and shall be bright orange with a self-peeling adhesive backing.

C. Guidelines to determine a structure is unsafe

1. Any building, structure, or area where, in the opinion of the code official or their designee, there is actual or potential danger to life. Refer to the definition of Imminent Danger – IEBC Section 116 Emergency Measures in the Definitions section
2. Any building considered Dangerous as defined by the IEBC.
 - a. The building or structure has collapsed, has partially collapsed, has moved off its foundation or lacks the necessary support of the ground.
 - b. There exists a significant risk of collapse, detachment or dislodgement of any portion, member, appurtenance or ornamentation of the building or structure under permanent, routine or frequent loads; under actual loads already in effect, or under snow, wind, rain, flood, earthquake or other environmental loads when such loads are imminent.
3. Any abandoned property that is not secured against entry, or cases where an abandoned property is secured against entry, yet is obviously dilapidated or shows clear evidence of danger.
4. Examples include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Buildings, structures or areas that are severely damaged by fire, explosion, flooding, severe weather, vehicle crashes, collapses.

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- b. Buildings, structures, or areas in which the electrical service has been compromised and is not able to be controlled that may affect the safety and/or welfare of the occupants.
- c. Buildings, structures, or areas with water damage that may cause ceiling, floor, or structural collapse.
- d. Buildings where there is significantly compromised means of egress

D. Response Policy

1. During normal business hours, a request for a representative from PAI, such as a county engineer or Chief Building Inspector, should be made through ADO for non-residential structures.
2. After hours and when an engineer is not available, a chief officer shall be requested.. This will typically be a non-emergency response unless requested otherwise by on-scene units.
3. The on-scene Incident Commander (IC) shall prepare a “briefing” for the responding chief which includes the current building conditions and the reason for the request.

E. Placement of Signage

1. The chief officer shall place the appropriate signage on predominant entrance(s), preferably the address side of the building.
2. Additional signage may be placed at other locations on the building at the discretion of the chief officer based on the specifics of the incident and structure.
3. Advise the owner, the owner’s representative, or the occupant of the posting, reason for posting, and the procedures for re-entry.
 - a. To re-enter, the owner/representative will need to call the department of PAI during business hours to schedule a re-inspection of the building. (410)887-3353

F. Notification of Signage Placement

1. Once signage is placed upon a building the notification of PAI is mandatory and should occur as soon as feasible but no later than the end of the chief officer’s respective shift.
2. An e-mail containing the following information shall be sent by a chief officer to DL-Fire-UnsafeBldgNotice - DL-Fire-UnsafeBldgNotice@baltimorecountymd.gov and to the ADO email (Note: OIC of USAR and Acting BC will forward this information to the on-duty BC/DC for distribution).
 - a. Address for Unsafe Building signage placement
 - b. Date of posting
 - c. Reason for the posting
 - d. Name and contact information of chief officer/OIC posting signage
 - e. Building Owner-Name/Contact information if available
 - f. Any additional information specific to the posting

Section II – Definitions/References

- A. IEBC - Section 116 Emergency measures, 116.1 Imminent danger: Where, in the opinion of the code official, there is imminent danger of failure or collapse of a building that endangers life, or where any building or part of a building has fallen and life is endangered by the occupation of the building, or where there is actual or potential danger to the building occupants or those in the proximity of any structure because of explosives, explosive

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fumes or vapors, or the presence of toxic fumes, gases, or materials, or operation of defective or dangerous equipment, the code official is hereby authorized and empowered to order and require the occupants to vacate the premises forthwith. The code official shall cause to be posted at each entrance to such structure a notice reading as follows: "This Structure Is Unsafe and Its Occupancy Has Been Prohibited by the Code Official." It shall be unlawful for any person to enter such structure except for the purpose of securing the structure, making the required repairs, removing the hazardous condition, or of demolishing the same.

B. Baltimore County Building Code Part 121 Unsafe Structures and Equipment

1. Part 121.1 Notice of Unsafe Structures. If an unsafe condition is found in a building or structure, the building official shall serve on the owner, agent or person in control of the building or structure a written notice describing the building or structure deemed unsafe and specifying the required repairs or improvements to be made to render the building or structure safe and secure, or requiring the unsafe building or structure or a portion thereof to be demolished within a stipulated time.
2. Part 121.5 temporary safeguards. If an unsafe condition exists which requires immediate correction, the code official may take such corrective action as is deemed appropriate and necessary to abate the unsafe condition prior to complying with the notice requirements of this section.

FIGURE 1

