



GENERAL ORDER

GENERAL ORDER 610.07

Posting Unsafe Buildings, Structures, and Areas

OFFICE OF THE FIRE MARSHAL

Issue Date: August 23, 2005

Revision Date: May 23, 2019

1 APPLICABILITY

2 All Personnel

3 POLICY

4 This General Order is in accordance with the Howard County Code, Sections 17.104: *Howard*
5 *County Fire Prevention Code*, 17.105: *Emergency Powers and Unsafe Structures* and 17.111: *Fire*
6 *Damaged Building or Structures*. Following are the procedures for posting unsafe buildings,
7 structures, or areas, actions required by the Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue
8 Services (Department) and reporting requirements. Posted buildings, structures, or associated
9 areas may not be entered or occupied until re-entry procedures contained within this General
10 Order are sufficiently met.

11 DEFINITIONS

12 ➤ **Stop Work Order** – legal notice requiring employers and business owners to
13 immediately suspend all work and business operations.

14 PROCEDURES

15 **AUTHORITY:**

16 The Fire Chief has delegated the authority to post unsafe buildings, structures, or areas to Field
17 Battalion Chiefs on emergency incidents.

18
19 Office of the Fire Marshal (OFM) Inspectors have the authority to:

- 20 ● Issue Stop Work Orders.
- 21 ● Evacuate and post buildings, structures, or areas as unsafe when hazardous work, a use,
22 a process, an operation, a condition or a Fire Prevention Code violation creates a
23 hazardous condition or imminent danger and requires a total or partial evacuation of
24 the building structure.

26 **FIELD BATTALION CHIEFS:**

27 The following are the procedures to be utilized by Field Battalion Chiefs to post an unsafe
28 building, structure or area.

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30 The following buildings, structures, or areas may be posted as unsafe as a result of an
31 emergency incident, or other event resulting in unsafe structural conditions:

- 32 • Buildings, structures, or areas that are severely damaged by fire or explosion.
- 33 • Buildings, structures, or areas that have structural damage from any cause (i.e., fire,
34 explosion, flooding, severe weather, vehicle crashes, collapses, and acts of terrorism).
- 35 • Buildings, structures, or areas where the electrical service has been compromised and
36 may affect the safety and/or welfare of the occupants.
- 37 • Buildings, structures, or areas with water damage that may cause ceiling, floor, or
38 structural collapse.
- 39 • Buildings, structures, or areas that constitute a fire or explosion hazard.
- 40 • Any condition that may affect the safety of the occupants of a building or structure.
- 41 • Any building, structure, or area deemed to be unsafe.

42

43 Procedures to be utilized by Field Battalion Chiefs for posting unsafe buildings, structures, or
44 areas:

- 45 • Determine that the building, structure, or area is unsafe to occupy.
- 46 • Post the building, structure, or area at all building and property entrances. **There are**
47 **two distinct signs available for posting buildings, structures, or areas:**
 - 48 ○ If there is severe fire damage, structural damage, compromised electrical service
49 or water damage that may cause collapse, use signs in Attachment A, from the
50 Department of Inspections, Licenses and Permits (DILP).
 - 51 ○ For all other incidents, use the internal Department signs in Attachment B.
- 52
- 53 • Advise the owner, the owner's representative, or the occupant of the posting, the
54 reason for posting, and the procedures for re-entry. Provide the owner with the Posting
55 Information Sheet (found on the OFM Intranet page). **Note:** If the owner, owner's
56 representative, or occupant is not available, post the owner's information sheet with
57 the sign posted at the main entrance to the structure.
- 58 • Complete the Notification of Posting (found on the OFM Intranet page) and fax or email
59 (as indicated on the tracking form) to agencies indicated prior to completion of the shift.
60 Forward the original to the Office of the Fire Marshal. External agencies receiving
61 notification include:
 - 62 ○ DILP
 - 63 ○ State Department of Assessments and Taxation
 - 64 ○ Howard County Council Administrator
 - 65 ○ Bureau of Environmental Health
- 66
- 67 • Complete a tracking form (found on the OFM Intranet page) and forward to the Office of
68 the Fire Marshal.
- 69 • Within five (5) calendar days, an OFM inspector shall inspect the posted property for
70 code violations and issue the owner a Notice of Violation for any Fire Prevention Code
71 violations found.
 - 72 ○ DILP and the Health Department may also inspect the posted property for
73 violations of their respective codes.

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75 **OFFICE OF THE FIRE MARSHAL INSPECTORS:**

76 The following are the procedures to be utilized by OFM Inspectors to post an unsafe building,
77 structure or area:

- 78 • Determine that there is a Fire Prevention Code violation, or hazardous work, a use, a
79 process, an operation, or a condition, any of which may create a hazardous condition
80 and imminent danger.
- 81 • Determine if the building, structure, or area needs to be evacuated.
- 82 • If evacuation is required, order the building, structure, or area evacuated, and
83 immediately notify the Bureau Chief of OFM or the authorized designee through the
84 OFM contact list.
 - 85 ○ Issue a Notice of Violation, citing any Fire Prevention Code violations, and order
86 the hazardous work, process, use, operation or condition be immediately
87 stopped and the Fire Prevention Code violation corrected.
 - 88 ○ Post the Department signs (Attachment B) at all building, structure or area and
89 property entrances.
- 90
- 91 • If evacuation is not required, issue a Notice of Violation, citing any Fire Prevention Code
92 violations, and order the hazardous work, process, use, operation or condition be
93 immediately stopped and the fire code violation corrected.
 - 94 ○ Evacuate the area where the violation is occurring.
 - 95 ○ Post the Department signs (Attachment B) isolating the area.
- 96
- 97 • If there is work (construction) being done without a permit, or in violation of the fire
98 code that creates a hazardous condition, request DILP to also issue a Stop Work Order.
99 If work (construction) is being done without a permit but does not create a hazardous
100 condition, notify DILP of the work being performed.

101

102 **RE-ENTRY INTO A POSTED BUILDING, STRUCTURE OR AREA:**

103 The posted building, structure, or area may not be entered or occupied until the following has
104 occurred:

- 105 • The Incident Commander may allow the owner/occupant to briefly enter the building,
106 structure or area to retrieve personal items and/or valuables, provided a reasonable
107 degree of safety can be maintained and the owner/occupant is accompanied by fire
108 service personnel designated by the Incident Commander.
- 109 • The Fire Official determines that the hazard has been abated and/or any Fire Prevention
110 Code violations are corrected and/or the building, structure or area is safe for re-entry.
- 111 • DILP has determined that the building, structure or area is safe for re-entry and issues a
112 building permit for repairs, alterations and construction to abate the hazard and/or
113 correct any building or Fire Prevention Code violations.
- 114 • The owner/occupant is responsible for safety and security of the building, structure,
115 and/or area when the fire service has cleared the scene.

116

117 Any posting signs utilized pursuant to this General Order shall not be removed until authorized
118 by the Department and DILP.

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120 REFERENCES

- 121 • Howard County Code, Section 17.104: *Howard County Fire Prevention Code*
- 122 • Howard County Code, Section 17.105: *Emergency Powers and Unsafe Structures*
- 123 • Howard County Code, Section 17.111: *Fire Damaged Building or Structures*

124 SUMMARY OF DOCUMENT CHANGES

125 Updated format, attachments and title changes

126 FORMS/ATTACHMENTS

- 127 • Attachment A – DILP Unsafe Building Posting
- 128 • Attachment B – Department’s Unsafe Area or Structure Sign

129 APPROVED

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Christine M. Uhlhorn, Fire Chief
Office of the Fire Chief

Author:

Gordon Wallace, Assistant Chief
Office of the Fire Marshal



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Attachment A

DEPARTMENT OF INSPECTIONS, LICENSES AND PERMITS
Inspections and Enforcement Division

THIS BUILDING IS UNSAFE
and its use or occupancy has been
PROHIBITED by the Building Official

Any Person or Persons removing or defacing this card will be
prosecuted to the Full Extent of the Law.

Date Posted _____ By _____

Direct questions to 410-313-1810

IE-28-990



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Attachment B

NOTICE

NOTICE

NOTICE

Posted by

HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT of FIRE & RESCUE



**DO NOT ENTER
UNSAFE AREA or
STRUCTURE**

Life Safety Code and/or Building Code Violations

Violators are subject to a fine under Howard County Code Title 17, Section 17.104 & 17.105. Reentry only with approval of Dept. of Fire & Rescue and Dept. of Inspection, License & Permits

Date Posted _____ **By** _____