

## **7-0-11 MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR SECURING ABANDONED OR DAMAGED STRUCTURES**

### **PURPOSE**

To minimize the impact of abandoned or damaged structures to a neighborhood and mitigate public nuisance properties.

### **GENERAL**

Commercial buildings and residential structures can become abandoned or damaged for many reasons including natural disasters and simple neglect. These buildings, if left unsecured, often attract illicit activity such as trespassing, drug use, and vandalism. The presence of these structures in a neighborhood can indicate an overall neighborhood decline and affect the value of property investments by other nearby property owners. An unsecured abandoned or damaged building creates a public nuisance that requires immediate securement.

Structures that have been so damaged, dilapidated, or partially collapsed may be defined as an unsafe or dangerous building and shall be secured against entry or occupancy. A Notice & Order may be issued ordering the structure to be repaired or vacated pursuant to the California Building Code and the Sonoma County Code. Property owners that elect to voluntarily vacate a structure shall secure the building to prevent nuisance conditions from being created.

Preference should be given to boarding a structure as the most effective way of securing a building. If boarding is not possible, the property owner may elect to place a fence around the structure to prevent entry. If site conditions prohibit the ability to secure a property by boarding or fencing, the subject structure must be demolished.

This policy shall not apply to agricultural storage buildings and rural built owner-occupied single-family dwellings ("Class K" housing).

### **AUTHORITY**

Sonoma County Code Chapter 7-19 – Definitions  
California Building Code Section 116

### **PROCEDURE**

- A. Any of the following conditions will require a structure to be secured by either boarding all exterior openings or by fencing:
  1. When a structure has been damaged by fire, wind, landslide, or other cause that renders a structure uninhabitable as determined by the Building Official pursuant to the Sonoma County Code, and a Notice & Order has been served to the property owner requiring that the structure be secured.

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2. When a structure or property has been noticed and declared to be an unsafe or dangerous building or a nuisance as defined in Section 7-19 of the Sonoma County Code and a repair permit cannot be issued for 90 days or more due to the inability to connect to a public utility or obtain necessary approvals for obtaining a permit. Additional time may be granted beyond 90 days due to extenuating circumstances as determined by supervisory or management staff.
  3. When a property owner elects to vacate a structure in response to any Notice & Order.
  4. Any abandoned structure or property where nuisance conditions as defined in Chapter 7 of the Sonoma County Code are observed.
- B. Boarding or fencing shall be completed per Permit Sonoma's Form CDE-006 Minimum Standards for Securing Abandoned or Damaged Structures.
- C. Maintaining property and monitoring:
1. The land surrounding the structure shall be maintained free from junk, trash, debris, high grass, or weeds during all times that the structure is vacant.
  2. Boarding or fencing shall be maintained until such time that repair permits are issued or the structure is demolished.
- D. Permit required for securing and monitoring the structure:
1. A permit is required to verify correct boarding and to monitor the structure once secured.
    - a. A building permit shall be issued for securing the structure per this policy. The permit shall be charged the board and secure permit fee per the annually adopted rate. Investigation and penalty fees shall not be applied unless specifically imposed by a Hearing Officer or by court order. The permit shall be issued for a period not to exceed 180 days and may be renewed with Code Enforcement approval.
    - b. Once the initial boarding of the structure is complete and approved by Building Inspection staff, the permit shall be turned over to Code Enforcement for monitoring.
    - c. Code Enforcement staff shall monitor the structure as necessary to maintain compliance and to ensure the property is rehabilitated in a timely manner.
    - d. If staff determines that the property/structure is not being maintained, Code Enforcement staff shall send a letter identifying the non-compliant feature and give the property owner sufficient time to obtain compliance. If the property owner fails to comply, staff shall initiate progressive abatement steps as required to achieve compliance.
  2. If the structure or property cannot be secured and demolition is required, a demolition permit is required pursuant to Section 7-5 of the Sonoma County Code.

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**ATTACHMENT**

[CDE-006 Minimum Standards for Securing Abandoned or Damaged Structures](#)

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