



# ANN ARBOR FIRE DEPARTMENT

## Standard Operating Procedures – 4.09 Unsafe Structure Placard



### UNSAFE STRUCTURE PLACARD

---

Effective: June 18, 2025  
Scheduled Review: June 18, 2028  
Approved: Fire Chief Mike Kennedy

---

#### I. PURPOSE

The fire department recognizes the inherent dangers and the increased risk to firefighters operating in unsafe structures. The 2021 *International Fire Code*® outlines the installation of a placard on unsafe structures to signify a warning to firefighters.

#### II. UNSAFE CONDITIONS

Structures that are unsafe or deficient because of inadequate means of egress, constitute a fire hazard, otherwise dangerous to human life or the public welfare, or which involve illegal or improper occupancy or inadequate maintenance, shall be deemed an unsafe condition. A vacant or abandoned structure which is not secured against unauthorized entry as shall be deemed unsafe.

A vacant or abandoned structure has a high probability of intentionally set fires and attracts criminal activity including “urban mining,” which could be defined as the intentional removal of structure systems, equipment, wiring, piping and structural elements. In addition, the deterioration of the structure due to exposure to the weather and / or age may weaken the structure causing rapid failure early in a fire. As structures are uninhabited, fires can develop for a significant period prior to detection and reporting. Vacant and abandoned structures may also contain hazardous materials or a significant amount of combustible fuel loads.

#### III. PLACARDS

Any vacant or abandoned building or structure determined to be unsafe shall be marked in accordance with Section 311 of the 2021 *International Fire Code*®. Placards shall be applied on the front of the structure and be visible from the street. Additional placards shall be applied to the side of each entrance to the structure. Placards shall bear the date of their application to the structure and the date of the most recent inspection.

#### IV. OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATION

The use of this symbol shall be informational only and shall not in any way limit the discretion of the incident commander. Defensive operations should be considered for advanced fires in buildings with this placard. Interior operations in these buildings should only occur after the incident commander has conducted an in-depth size-up.

