



HISTORIC ALBANY FOUNDATION

## Red “X” Markings on Vacant Buildings

### WHAT are the “X”s?

When you see a Red “X” on a vacant building, it indicates to “first responders”-police officers, fire department staff and building department staff – that the building is considered unsafe for emergency personnel. For first responder safety and as a precautionary measure, the Red “X” symbols are being installed on vacant buildings that have been inspected and deemed unsafe for emergency response personnel to enter. It advises extreme caution and that all emergency responders should limit fire fighting to outside operations only, and to enter inside only if there are known life hazards such as a person trapped inside.

The Red “X” does not show that the building is to be demolished or rehabbed or otherwise. The safety hazards present in a building can be holes in the floor, missing fire escapes, missing or unsafe stairs, and open roofs among other potential safety hazards.

### What is the **PROCESS**?

The City of Albany’s Fire Department is systematically inspecting vacant buildings to determine which buildings require a Red “X”. Once a building has been inspected by the Fire Department, the building is referred to their Fire Investigation Unit to determine if the building should be posted with a “X”. There are also code violations and those are sent to the Department of Buildings and Regulatory Compliance which will begin the process to make the building safer. Further documentation such as a structural engineer’s report may be requested by the Department of Buildings and Regulatory Compliance from the owner to determine the building’s structural stability. If the code violations are not cleared up satisfactorily, the property owner can be cited and requested to appear in Codes and/ or Vacant Building Court.

The “X” buildings are scheduled to be inspected by the Fire Department twice a year.



## **WHERE can I find more information?**

An FAQ about “X” installation and a link to the code can be found on the Albany Fire Department website <http://www.albanyny.org/Government/Departments/FireDepartments.aspx>.

## **WHO can I call or email?**

Questions can be directed to the Albany Fire Department at (518) 447-7879 or the Department of Buildings and Regulatory Compliance at (518) 434-5165.

## **WHY are vacant buildings being marked with an “X”?**

The 2015 International Fire Code, which was adopted by New York State and followed by the City of Albany, requires fire departments to placard unsafe vacant buildings. The relevant section is 311.5, which can be found on the back of this sheet. The full code can be found here: [http://codes.iccsafe.org/app/book/content/2015-I-Codes/NY/2015\\_IFC\\_HTML/Chapter%203.html](http://codes.iccsafe.org/app/book/content/2015-I-Codes/NY/2015_IFC_HTML/Chapter%203.html)

### **2015 International Fire Code Section 311.5 Placards**

*Any vacant or abandoned buildings or structures determined to be unsafe pursuant to Section 110 of this code relating to structural or interior hazards shall be marked as required by Sections 311.5.1 through 311.5.5.*



#### *311.5.1 Placard location.*

*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 and on penthouses.*

#### *311.5.2 Placard size and color.*

*Placards shall be 24 inches by 24 inches minimum in size with a red background, white reflective stripes and a white reflected border. The stripes and border shall have a 2-inch minimum stroke.*

#### *311.5.3 Placard date.*

*Placards shall bear the date of their application to the building and the date of the most recent inspection.*

#### *311.5.4 Placard symbols.*

*The design of the placards shall use the following symbols:*

- 1. □ This symbol shall mean that the structure had normal structural conditions at the time of marking.*
- 2. ☒ This symbol shall mean that the structural or interior hazards exist and interior fire-fighters or rescue operations should be conducted with extreme caution.*
- 3. ☒ This symbol shall mean that structural or interior hazards exist to a degree that consideration should be given to limit fire fighting to exterior operations only, with entry only occurring for known life hazards.*
- 4. Vacant marker hazard identification symbols: The following symbols shall be used to designate known hazards on the vacant building marker. They shall be placed directly above the symbol.*
  - 4.1. R/O - Roof open*
  - 4.2. S/M - Stairs, steps and landing missing*
  - 4.3. F/E - Avoid fire escapes*
  - 4.4. H/F - Holes in floor*

#### *311.5.5 Informational use.*

*The use of these symbols shall be for informational only and shall not in any way limit the discretion of the on-scene incident commander.*