



Post-incident Entry into Damaged Structures

Post-incident activities at buildings involved in fires are complex situations that vary widely, based on the specifics of the incident. The information listed below should be considered guidelines and all actions taken will be driven by the principles of life safety, investigation integrity, and the direction of City of Downey officials. Insurance concerns, beyond the control of City departments, may place independent restrictions on activities at the location. While Downey Fire Department is sensitive to the desire of building occupants to return to the fire incident and begin the rebuilding process, our primary mission is to protect and preserve the health and safety of the public.



Fire Investigation

- Every fire incident requires an investigation relating to the cause and origin of the fire. The Downey Fire Department investigator will determine when the scene may be released from the investigation after all information has been gathered. Factors such as building stability, criminal investigation, or other circumstances may extend this time period
- A Fire Incident report may be obtained through the City Clerk's office by completing a public records request. These reports generally require 5-10 business days after completion of the investigation to complete.
- At time, the insurance provider of the building may require an independent fire investigation. This investigation is conducted independent of the Fire Department investigation and requires communication between the City and the insurance company.

Entry into a Damaged Structure

The City of Downey Building Division is responsible for determining the structural integrity of a damaged building. Approval and conditions of entering the structure must be obtained from the Building Official.

- If the fire investigation is ongoing, communication with the investigator must be made prior to entry. Entry may be denied by the fire investigator if the fire cause is pending or if criminal activity is suspected.
- Direct communication between the fire department and insurance provider allows for independent fire investigation (if conducted) and any structural assessments that must occur prior to entering the building for investigative purposes.
- After the release of an incident scene, following a fire investigation, the Building and Code Enforcement Divisions will provide guidance as to the next steps and disposition of the building.

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Yellow Placard: RESTRICTED/ LIMITED USE

When a building is posted with a Yellow RESTRICTED/ LIMITED USE placard, it signifies that the building has sustained some level of damage but may still be habitable. Occupancy may be allowed in specific sections of the building, provided that the restrictions outlined on the yellow placard are strictly followed. It is crucial to adhere to these restrictions to ensure the safety and well-being of all occupants. Below are some of the items that play a role in determining if the building can be re-occupied and will be taken into consideration by the Building Official when determining safe occupancy:

- What is the condition of the structural system?
- What is the condition of non-structural items such as: the chimney, partitions, ceiling systems, equipment? Do they present falling hazards?
- What is the condition of the fire suppression and detection equipment?
- Has the electrical system been damaged by the fire or water, can the power be turned back on?
- Has the gas piping been damaged by the fire, can the gas be turned back on?
- Has the means of egress been compromised by the fire/damage?
- If people are allowed back in the building, will they be able to exit safely?
- Will there still be the required number of exits?

Request a meeting with the Building Division and Fire Department prior to moving forward. It is important to note that the specific actions to be taken will be heavily influenced by the unique circumstances and the extent of the damage to the building.

Depending on site specifics and the extent of damage, it may be necessary to have a structural engineer and/or licensed contractor evaluate the damage and develop a plan for mitigating any identified hazards. This process is crucial in order to protect the safety of all individuals involved in the assessment, and any subsequent repairs or mitigation efforts.

1. Provide a site plan that shows how access to the site will be provided.
2. Provide a floor plan that shows the following:
 - A. The exits and a continuous and unobstructed means of egress from all occupiable areas of the building or facility.
 - B. Indicate area of damage and area of proposed occupancy.
 - C. Indicate location of utilities, both permanent and temporary.
3. For residential occupancies: The kitchen, at least one bathroom and a sleeping area must be undamaged and occupiable in order for occupancy to be considered.
 - A. Occupancy will not be allowed prior to utilities release. Building must be weather tight prior to meter releases.
4. A licensed electrician and a licensed plumber shall conduct a post incident investigation and report to the Building Division, in writing that:
 - A. The electrical system is safe and all damaged electrical has been removed back to the main panel.

RESTRICTED USE

Caution: This structure has been inspected and found to be damaged as described below: _____

Date: _____
Time: _____

Entry, occupancy, and lawful use are restricted as indicated below: _____

(Caution: Aftershocks since inspection may increase damage and risk.)

This facility was inspected under emergency conditions for: _____
(Jurisdiction) _____

Inspector ID / Agency: _____

Facility Name and Address: _____

Do Not Remove, Alter, or Cover this Placard until Authorized by Governing Authority

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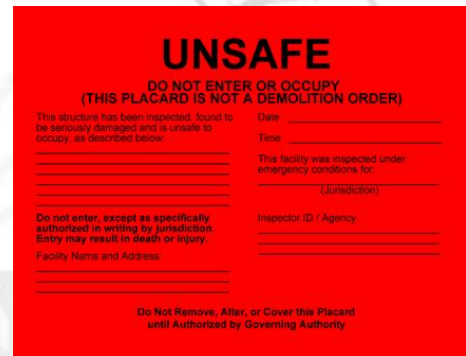


- B. All gas lines supplying the fire damaged area have been removed and capped.
 - C. An entire building gas test has been performed in accordance with California Plumbing Code requirements and the gas piping is safe.
5. If the electrical and gas is deemed safe, an electrical permit and a plumbing permit shall be obtained from the Building Division for a "Post Fire Meter Release/Inspection".
 6. Once a permit is obtained, an inspection can be requested.
 7. The building inspector will perform an inspection, and if they concur with the electrician's and plumber's conclusion, they will release the meters to the utility.

Red Placard: DO NOT ENTER OR OCCUPY/UNSAFE

When a building is posted with a red DO NOT ENTER OR OCCUPY/UNSAFE placard, it signifies a critical situation, where there is an immediate risk associated with entering, using, or occupying the structure. The red tag serves as a strong indication that the building is unsafe, and should not be accessed until the hazards have been addressed, and the tag has been removed by the Building Official.

With prior approval from the Building Official and Fire Department, there are circumstances where the building owner may be able to temporarily enter a red tagged structure for the removal of goods or to facilitate a damage assessment by a qualified construction professional (licensed contractor, design professional, or structural engineer).



1. Depending on the extent of the damage, it may be necessary to have a structural engineer assess the structural integrity of the building and develop a plan for mitigating any identified hazards before temporary access is permitted. This process is crucial in order to protect the safety of all individuals evolved in the assessment, and any subsequent repairs or mitigation efforts.
 - A. This may include: shoring the building to provide additional structural support, removing any potential falling hazards to safeguard those working in and around the building, constructing overhead barriers or other protective structures to create safe zones within the building.
 - B. These strategies are aimed at mitigating risks and creating conditions that allow for the safe entry into all or specific parts of the building. With the goal to enable the safe and efficient assessment and repair of any damage while safeguarding the well-being of everyone involved.
 - C. At the discretion of the Building Official, it may be required to pull an emergency permit to perform work on the building to make it safe to enter.
2. Prior to granting temporary access to the structure, the Building Official and Fire Department will meet with the building owner.
3. During this meeting the building owner shall propose a hazard mitigation plan and a satisfactory method of how and where they will enter the building. The plan should outline the proposed method for safely entering the building and retrieving goods with a clear focus on minimizing risks and protecting the well-being of those

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involved. It is important to thoroughly review and agree upon the proposed plan before any access is granted, to ensure the process is carried out in a manner that prioritizes safety, and mitigates potential hazards.

4. If this method is acceptable, the building may be entered in accordance with the method.
5. It may be required that any entry to the structure be under the supervision of the building and/or fire department.

Post-incident remediation and reconstruction

- Plan review, inspection, and approval may be required for post-incident construction. Please contact Downey Fire Department, Fire Prevention Bureau at (562) 904-7345 and the City of Downey Building Division at 562-904-7142 or buildingdept@downeyca.org for additional guidance and requirements and prior to starting any demo or repair work.

Please see below for some of the resources that are available to assist you after a disaster

- [California Social Services- Disaster Help Center](#): designed to provide information and resources regarding public assistance and services available to individuals and families impacted by California wildfires and other natural disasters or emergencies.
- [American Red Cross](#): available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to assist individuals and families displaced by natural and man-made disasters, including home fires (the majority of responses), wildfires, earthquakes, floods.
- [So Cal Edison- Disaster Support](#): When major disasters strike, SCE has a dedicated Customer Support Team to help impacted customers.
- [So Cal Gas](#): Emergency Disaster Relief.
- [Public Utility Commission](#): Some gas and electric utilities offer cash assistance and special payment plans to consumers facing financial hardship.
- [City of Downey Emergency Information](#)

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