Developing Solutions for a Chronic Vacant Building Problem

Martin McMillan

City of Rochester, Rochester, New York

Certification Statement

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given when I have used the language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another.

Signed: *Martin W. McMillan*

Abstract

The city of Rochester, New York has a chronic vacant building problem, and has unsuccessfully implemented a proposed plan to address this issue. The purpose of the research was to create solutions for the successful implementation of a vacant building inspection and marking program for the city of Rochester. Action research was utilized to answer the following four research questions: (a) What adaptive challenges(s) have prevented the implementation of a vacant building inspection and marking program for the city of Rochester? (b) What technical problems have prevented the implementation of a vacant building inspection and marking program for the city of Rochester? (c) What potential remedies can be identified and developed that may enable the city of Rochester to successfully implement a vacant building inspection and marking program? (d) What action items need to be created that would support the implementation of a vacant building inspection and marking system in Rochester, New York? Procedurally, research was conducted using internet search engines, an email survey of 911 Centers, interviews, and the Learning Resource Center at the National Fire Academy. Two separate vacant building inspection programs were used to collect data. The results revealed that the city of Rochester has successfully implemented a vacant building management program developed from ten core recommendations. The program includes a building marking component with nationally recognized symbols, and a colored coded premise warnings system that ranks vacant building hazards using the colors green, yellow, and red. A series of graduated recommendations for communities contemplating the implementation of a vacant building inspection and marking program in their jurisdictions were outlined. Several action item documents were developed for this applied research project; including standard operating guidelines, an inspection instruction manual, department directives, and inspection spreadsheets.

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Developing Solutions for a Chronic Vacant Building Problem

The city of Rochester, New York has a chronic vacant building problem, and has unsuccessfully implemented a proposed plan that was created to address this issue. The purpose of the research is to identify the issues and barriers that have impeded the successful implementation of a building inspection and marking system specifically designed to address the vacant properties in Rochester, New York. The research focuses on creating solutions to the adaptive and technical problems that have prevented the proposed plan from being completely implemented.

Action research will be utilized to answer the following four research questions: (a) What adaptive challenge(s) have prevented the implementation of a vacant building inspection and marking program for the city of Rochester? (b) What technical problem(s) have prevented the implementation of a vacant building inspection and marking program for the city of Rochester? (c) What potential remedies can be identified and developed that may enable the city of Rochester to successfully implement a vacant building inspection and marking program? (d) What action items need to be created that would support the implementation of a vacant building inspection and marking system in Rochester, New York?

Background and Significance

The city of Rochester, New York, has an abundance of vacant and abandoned buildings. In recent years, the number of these structures has hovered around 2600 individual properties. The actual number of vacant structures fluctuates from year to year as new properties are added to the list, and others are rehabilitated or demolished. A significant number of these structures have been gutted by arson fires; many have serious structural flaws that pose a threat to firefighters and the public at large. Vacant buildings in our community are often the site of

frequent criminal activity that diminishes the quality of life in the immediate area. Drug dealing, prostitution, gang related issues, and metal thefts are often associated with vacant building addresses in our community.

The price of scrap metal has risen sharply, and metal thefts are now common place in city neighborhoods. Thieves routinely target vacant structures, and often remove natural gas lines and copper water pipes from uninhabited buildings in both residential and commercial neighborhoods. The utilities in many of these properties have not been disconnected, and the Rochester Fire Department (RFD) is routinely dispatched to vacant structures for free flowing natural gas emergencies and flooding basements. These incidents place firefighters and the public at significant risk. A recent example occurred in the city of Rochester on August 24, 2012, and involved a vacant house. Thieves removed a gas stove and left the natural gas line free flowing. The home eventually exploded and destroyed the house. The blast damaged neighboring properties, and injured a woman in an adjacent structure ("Vacant House Explosion," 2012, p. 1).

The citizens of the city of Rochester and the RFD have been significantly impacted by the prevalence of vacant buildings in our community. The frequency of vacant building fires, and the fact that the overwhelming majority of these structure fires are determined to be caused by arson is alarming. The department responded to 9,462 structure fires between 2001-2012; during that twelve year period, 1,092 of those fires occurred in vacant buildings. The city averaged 91 vacant structures per year for that twelve year period (see Table 1, p.9).

Table 1 indicates the number of vacant structure fires compared to the total number of structure fires that occurred in the city from 2001 through 2012. The figures used to compile

Tables 1 were obtained from the Rochester Fire Department's Planning and Research Division data base (M. Dobbertin, personal communication, January, 2013).

Table 1

City of Rochester Fire Department Structure Fires For period 2000 to 2012

Year	Vacant Structure Fires	Total # of Structure Fires
2001	119	875
2002	93	863
2003	120	863
2004	96	787
2005	97	785
2006	100	743
2007	75	854
2008	105	745
2009	79	738
2010	69	684
2011	77	763
2012	62	762
Totals:	1092	9462
Ave. per year:	91	789

Source : Rochester Fire Department Planning & Research Division 2013.

Table 2 illustrates the total of vacant structure fires that occurred each year during the period of 2001-2012 in the city of Rochester. The total number of arson vacant structures fires is

represented for the same time period. The figures used to compile Table 2 were obtained from the Rochester Fire Department's Planning and Research Division. During the twelve year period of 2001-2012, the city of Rochester averaged 76 vacant structure fires per year that were ruled arsons (M. Dobbertin, personal communication, January, 2013).

Table 2

City of Rochester Fire Department Vacant Arson Structure Fires For period 2001-2012

Year	Vacant Structure Fires	Total # Arson Vacant Structure Fires
2001	119	93
2002	93	81
2003	120	102
2004	96	74
2005	97	81
2006	100	75
2007	75	64
2008	105	76
2009	79	65
2010	69	67
2011	77	73
2012	62	60
Totals:	1092	911
Ave. per year:	91	76

Source: Rochester Fire Department's Planning and Research Division 2013.

The data presented in Tables 1 and 2 further illustrate the seriousness of the vacant building problem in the city and its chronic nature. These structures often impact the quality of life of the citizens who live next door or in the immediate vicinity. Firefighters who are summoned to fight theses fires are also subjected to unnecessary risks. Vacant and abandoned buildings create serious issues for the citizens and workforce of the city of Rochester.

Fortunately, the city's administration has recognized the vacant building problem and its chronic existence. The mayor's office, his administrative staff, and members of city council have collaborated to develop long range plans to address some of the problems. Legislation was previously enacted requiring property owners to secure, and when necessary board their vacant properties. Funding has been appropriated for demolition contracts, and the city's public works department has board-up crews that secure city owned and privately held abandoned properties. In recent years the number of vacant structures demolished in the city has increased sharply. Unfortunately, the financial implications associated with completely ridding the city of all vacant structures are cost prohibited.

In November of 2005, city residents elected a new mayor. Robert Duffy had recently retired from the Rochester Police Department, where he served as the city's Police Chief. Mayor Duffy's election win ended his 29 year career in law enforcement, however his campaign developed a platform that focused on public safety, educational reform, and economic development ("Robert J. Duffy," 2006, p. 1).

Mayor Duffy's public safety initiative included a goal to reduce the number of vacant structures in the city. A committee was formed to develop strategies that crossed departmental lines, and addressed the vacant structure problem from a city-wide perspective.

The committee was comprised of members of the mayor's senior management team, deputy directors, department leaders, and staff personnel that represented a cross section of all the city's major departments. The committee worked diligently throughout the 2009-2010 fiscal year, and developed strategies and programs that focused on experimenting with various board-up methods, tracking criminal activity at vacant addresses, reducing the overall number of vacant buildings, and creating programs to identify, inspect, track, and mark vacant buildings in the city (McMillan, 2011, p. 9-10).

Specifically relevant to this applied research project was the building marking component. Many committee members were extremely concerned about this element, and voiced opposition to signage that was either spray painted on the building or too large. The initial proposal recommended signs that were 24 inches square, and painted with fluorescent paint. The size and color of the proposed signs were a serious issue, and the committee spent considerable time and energy on this subject. Eventually, a consensus was reached, and the size and color of the signs were determined. The plan included signs that were reduced in size to 12 inches square, made from an aluminum sign blanks that had a white reflective background, and symbols that were painted on the sign using a fluorescent paint. The symbols were consistent with the *2006 International Fire Code* ("2006 INTERNATIONAL FIRE CODE," 2006). The code requires the following symbols; a square, a slash, and a (X). The Rochester Police Department requested a two color sign system to differentiate between property ownership; city owned buildings were to be marked with fluorescent green and white signs, and privately owned structures with fluorescent orange and white. The program was scheduled to be implemented during the 2010-2011 fiscal year, but was delayed after committee members learned that the state

of New York was considering new code language for 2011 that would render the city of Rochester's vacant marking system noncompliant (McMillan, 2011, p. 44).

Initially, this was a disappointing setback because it had taken the committee several years to reach a consensus and obtain funding for this project. The fluorescent color signage system was scrapped and the project placed on hold.

The state of New York uses portions of the International Code Council's codes to comply the state's building and fire codes. On January 1, 2011, the Fire Code of New York State adopted sections 311.5 through 311.5.5 from the *2006 International Fire Code* (see Appendix B). These code sections require placards for unsafe buildings and specify the size, color, symbols, and location of the placards that are to be utilized when placarding vacant structures in New York (2010 Fire code of New York State, 2010).

The adoption of the new code language created additional challenges that needed to be overcome in order for the program to be successfully implemented. Several key issues have been solved; however solutions to others remain unfinished. Researching remedies to the remaining problems is the focus and relevance of this research project.

Historically, the vacant building problem can be traced back to the 1960s. In recent years, significant progress has been made and solutions are forthcoming. This applied research project (ARP) addresses many of the remaining challenges.

For readers wishing to draw a comparison between their home response districts and the city of Rochester, a brief overview has been provided. Rochester is a mid-size city located in Upstate region of New York. Like many northeastern cities, Rochester once enjoyed a thriving manufacturing sector. Proudly known as the imaging capital of the world, Rochester is home to several industry giants. The Eastman Kodak Company, Xerox Corporation, and Bausch and

Lomb are headquartered in the city. Kodak was a pillar in the community and employed over 60,000 people in the 1980's. The company is currently in bankruptcy and attempting to reinvent itself (Tucker, 2012, p. 1). Many of issues facing the city, including the vacant housing problem, can be attributed to the significant loss of manufacturing jobs. The United States Census Bureau estimates that the city's population at the end of 2011 was 210,855 people ("Quickfacts," 2013, p. 1).

The City of Rochester Fire Department (RFD) is responsible for providing the citizens of Rochester with a wide spectrum of emergency services. The RFD is a career department with 499 employees. A traditional fire response model is followed, and the RFD operates 20 fire companies out of 16 fire stations. In 2012, fire units responded to over 32,000 calls for service; nearly half of these responses were emergency medical incidents (M. Dobbertin, personal communication, January, 2013).

The following strategic goals have been identified by the United States Fire Administration (USFA) for fiscal years 2010-2014:

> (a) Reduce risk at the local level through prevention and mitigation. (b) Improve local planning and preparedness. (c) Improve the fire and emergency services' capability for response to and recovery from all hazards. (d) Improve the fire and emergency services professional status. (e) Lead the Nation's fire and emergency services by establishing and sustaining USFA as a dynamic organization (http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/downloads/pdf/strategic_plan.pdf).

This ARP relates to two of the five strategic goals: (a) Reduce risk at the local level through prevention and mitigation with an emphasis on the code development and compliance objective, (b) Improve the fire and emergency services' capability for response to and recovery from all hazards, specially the objectives that improve incident decision-making skills and promote a culture change that enhances firefighter safety and survival ("Strategic plan", 2010, p. 18-20). This ARP is also linked to the EFO program's fourth course, Executive Leadership;

specifically units 4 and 8 which focus on the subjects of thinking politically, and the development of successful techniques applicable to influencing and persuading (National Fire Academy, 2012, Chapters 4 & 8).

Literature Review

This ARP is the third in a series of research papers written by this author with the intention of solving some of the issues that a chronic vacant problem creates in an urban environment. The first research paper entitled *Vacant Buildings in Rochester, New York: Are We Adequately Addressing the Problem?* examined the issue in general terms. Eight research questions were developed in this analysis. They included: (a) What are the current policies and procedures that exist within the framework of the city of Rochester that specifically deal with the vacant building issue? (b) What materials and methods are required to adequately secure vacant properties? (c) What are the costs associated with securing or demolishing vacant properties? (d) Once a vacant property has been identified, how should that information be disseminated? (e) When fire companies are dispatched to an alarm, should they be notified that the address is a known vacant property? (f) Should vacant structures be marked with an identification system? (g) Does the city of Rochester Fire Department have adequate standard operating guidelines (SOGs) in place to address firefighting in vacant buildings? (h) What are the attitudes and opinions of the chief officers of the Rochester Fire Department regarding structural firefighting tactics for vacant building fires?

Questions (d), (e), and (f) were explored further in a second ARP entitled *Implementing a Vacant Building Marking System in Rochester, New York.* Action research was utilized to answer three research questions that were designed to provide the foundation for establishing a vacant building marking and inspection system. The research questions were: (a) What are the

classifications for identifying vacant and abandoned buildings in Rochester, New York? (b) How are the standards for marking vacant and abandoned buildings implemented by the various departments in the city of Rochester? (c) What elements should be included in a uniformed vacant building and marking system for the city of Rochester?

Several individual authors and nationally recognized organizations have published documents that were relevant two both ARPs. Their core lists of recommendations were utilized to develop the blueprint for the vacant building and marking program for the city of Rochester, New York, and answered research question (c) in the previous paragraph.

Identifying and marking vacant structures in a community is not a new phenomenon. An internet search relating to vacant building marking programs will reveal several classic articles. Vincent Dunn, a retired Deputy Chief from the FDNY and a contributing editor for *Firehouse* magazine wrote an article in 2000, and referenced the vacant building problem in New York City in the 1970s. At the conclusion of his magazine article, *Vacant Building Fires,* Dunn (2000) made seven suggestions that may enhance the safety of responding firefighters. Dunn (2000) recommended that communities take the following actions:

- Seal up or demolish the vacant structures.
- Fire companies should conduct familiarization inspections and note the hazards that are present in the structure.
- Cyclical inspections should be conducted and any new information should be distributed to first due companies.
- Warning signs should be installed on the outside of the buildings near all entrances.
- Fire departments should develop defensive strategies for vacant building firefighting.
- Request police assistance to monitor vacant structures and prevent entry.
- Preplan the large commercial vacant properties in your communities (Dunn, 2000, p. 20).

In 2001, *Fire Chief* magazine published an article that reflected on a National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) report that investigated the tragic deaths of six

Worcester, Massachusetts firefighters in 1999. These firefighters died while fighting a fire in a six story vacant cold storage warehouse. The article was entitled *No Empty Threat.* It was authored by a fire protection consultant from Lunenburg, Massachusetts. Jones (2001) outlined a series of strategies for managing vacant and abandoned building in a community. His recommendations included:

- develop a system to identify at-risk properties and track those that are vacant and abandoned.
- evaluate vacant an abandoned properties.
- institute a system that communicates potential hazards found in vacant and abandoned buildings to responding firefighters.
- develop a marking system that alerts firefighters to the potential hazards in vacant and abandoned properties (Jones, 2001, p. 32).

NIOSH published a report in July of 2010 entitled *NIOSH Alert Preventing Deaths and Injuries of Firefighters using Risk Management Principles at Structure Fires*. The report made several recommendations that have been consistence with NIOSH's overall strategy to decrease the number of injuries, and fatalities that occur to firefighters while operating at vacant building fires. The report recommended the following:

- Fire departments should work with Federal, State, and local authorities to develop and implement a strategy to identify, mark, secure, and where possible demolish unsafe structures within their jurisdictions.
- Fire Departments need to preplan and inspect the vacant buildings in their communities.
- Inspection and preplan information should be load into computer data bases and readily available to dispatchers and responding personnel; this should include other departments who provide mutual-aid response to the same area.
- All fire department personnel should be trained to properly size-up vacant and unsafe structures and recognize the building marking system in their response area (National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, 2010, p. 32).

NIOSH continues to cite variations of these recommendations when publishing the findings of line of duty death (LODD) investigations that occur in known vacant structures that

have minimal or no value. Their most recent report concerning this issue describes the events that occurred in Chicago, Illinois, on December 22, 2010. Two members of the Chicago Fire Department lost their lives while fighting a fire in a vacant commercial structure. The building had been vacant for years, and the owner cited by city building inspectors (National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health [NIOSH], 2011, p. 2).

The recommendations put forth by Dunn (2000), Jones (2001), and NIOSH (2010) provided the backbone for the second ARP written by this author; *Implementing a Vacant Building Marking System in Rochester, New York.* The inability to completely implement all of these recommendations created the need to conduct further research.

The first research question asked; (a) What adaptive challenge(s) have prevented the implementation of a vacant building inspection and marking program for the city of Rochester? It is imperative to define the differences between adaptive challenges and technical problems before attempting to answer the first two research questions. Adaptive challenges are problems that are often difficult to identify, require changes in values and beliefs, often cross organizational boundaries, and sometimes require experimentation. Technical problems are usually easy to identify, generally can be solved quickly, require minimal organizational change, and are solved by individuals with expertise in the subject matter (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002).

Beginning in 2003, the Rochester Fire Department's safety office began looking at the possibility of marking the vacant buildings located within the city of Rochester with a series of spray painted symbols that would identify the hazards. The New York City Fire Department (FDNY) had been successfully using this technique for decades, and the Buffalo Fire Department was experimenting with a similar program (McMillan, 2011).

Battalion Chief Charles Stadler was assigned to the RFD's safety office between 2003-2005. Chief Stadler wanted to initiate a similar program in Rochester and shared his proposal with fellow firefighters before sending it up the chain of command (C. Stadler, personal communication, December, 2012). It has been almost ten years since that first proposal was submitted; three separate mayoral administrations, three different fire chiefs, and several new city council members have come and gone. Adaptive challenges often take time to solve; they are works in progress.

Identifying vacant structures with placards or spray painted symbols can be a controversial issue. In Rochester, opinions have varied regarding the need, appearance, and size of the proposed signage. One of the primary concerns is placing a *scarlet letter* on a vacant structure. This is not a local phenomenon.

An article published in *FIREHOUSE* illustrates the point and was entitled *"Scarlett Letters" Put on Vacant Md. Buildings.* The story references a pilot program that the Baltimore City Fire Department is experimenting with called Code-X-ray. The city began marking unsafe buildings with a white "X" on a red background to warn firefighters that the identified structure has serious structural flaws, and is unsafe for interior firefighting operations. The residents in the neighborhoods where the signs were posted are referring to the "X's" as *scarlet letters*. The term borrowed from the title of a book, *The Scarlet Letter,* is meant to convey something that is shameful ("Scarlett Letters," 2011, p. 1).

In Chicago, the city's zoning committee endorsed a similar measure to identify the dangerous buildings in their city. Two foot square reflective signs, each with a large red "X" are being placed on buildings that city inspectors have deemed unsafe. The intent of the measure is to warn all first responders of the inherent dangers associated with these properties. A Chicago

fire related website posted an article referencing this new requirement and entitled the story, *Chicago proposes the Scarlet Letter* ("Chicago Proposes The Scarlet Letter," 2012, p. 1).

The term *scarlet letter* was introduced to the public locally after several news organizations featured stories regarding the vacant building problem in the city. The topic has been of local interest since 2011, with stories running periodically. Rochester's local newspaper, the *Democrat and Chronicle* ran a front page news story detailing this issue. The headline was placed in a backdrop of flames and read, *Safety Issues-Vacant Houses-Firefighters in Jeopardy.* The story summarized new state fire code requirements that require unsafe buildings to be placarded. The new legislation became effective on January 1, 2011, (2010 Fire code of New York State, 2010). The intent of the article was to inform the public that the city was not following the new law, and intentionally placing firefighters at risk. Sections of the law relevant to this ARP have been included in the appendices (see Appendix B). The article contained the following paragraph:

> The city has been reluctant to put up the placards, fearing that the "scarlet letter" would infuriate neighbors and invite mischief. Rochester, like Syracuse, says they have found a better way by entering warnings electronically into the dispatch system (Sharp, 2011, p. 1).

The article sought comments from the president of the city's firefighters union regarding the city's noncompliance with the new code. Union president Jim McTiernan, referencing a complaint filed with the state Department of Labor on another matter and the placarding code violation was quoted, "They know they are violating the law. … What's happening here is they are trying to cut money in the Fire Department, and the way they are doing that is by putting safety in the backseat" (Sharp, 2011, p. 1). The author of this ARP was also quoted in the same article. Remarks from a previous ARP entitled, *Implementing a Vacant Building Marking System in Rochester, New York* were cited in large block letters. The quote reflected the author's

view that a vacant building inspection and marking system implemented within the city would enhance firefighter safety on the fire ground. The lack of a vacant marking program was the basis for the following quote, "This issue routinely places Rochester firefighters at unnecessary risks, and requires immediate attention, coupled with long-lasting solutions. These facts support the need for a building marking system in the city of Rochester. Deputy Fire Chief Martin McMillan" (McMillan, 2011, p. 41).

Several months later the city filed a petition with the state of New York seeking relief from the placarding requirement. The city presented several arguments to support their variance request. Their primary position was that the city had instituted a vacant building inspection program, and that the data collected from this program was conveyed to the city's Emergency Communication Department (ECD), 911 Center. The inspection data was compiled into premise warnings for each vacant building address. ECD dispatchers were currently transmitting vacant building premise warnings to responding companies via radio transmissions, and computer terminals located in the fire stations and response vehicles. Simply phrased, city officials wanted to substitute premise warnings for placards, and were seeking relief from the new code (*In the Matter of the Petition of City of Rochester for a variance to the New York State Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code*, 2012).

The request for a variance created another round of news stories and accusations. The *Democrat and Chronicle* published another newspaper story indicating that the city was seeking a variance from the state regarding the placarding of its vacant structures. Mayor Thomas Richards was quoted in the article. An excerpt from a letter he sent to the state supporting the variance request follows:

Mayor Richards likened the placards to "scarlet letters" that could invite squatters and vandals, drive up insurance rates on adjacent landowners, and serve as "symbols of a

deteriorating housing stock". He estimated costs of a placard program could run near $1 million a year ("City, Firefighters At Odds Over Placards," 2012, p. 1B).

A nationally recognized firefighting website picked up the story and published the entire newspaper article with one exception, a different title was inserted. The new title, "*Moron Politicians In NY Want To Side Step Law Aimed At Protecting FF's"* ("Moron Politicians," 2012, p. 1).

The article was critical of the city's variance request, but did not frame the entire argument. The article never mentioned that the city had an aggressive vacant building inspection program in place, and that the program included nine out of the ten core recommendations suggested by Dunn (2000), Jones (2001), and NIOSH (2010).

The number of vacant properties present in a particular city can significantly impact the ability to manage the problem effectively. Communities with a small number of vacant structures have a distinct advantage and can effectively address the issue. In Upstate New York, the three major metropolitan areas, Buffalo, Rochester, and Syracuse are addressing the vacant building problem differently. Buffalo has 20,000 vacant properties. Rochester and Syracuse have approximately ten percent of that number with 2525 and 1850 respectively (Sharp, 2012, p. 6A). Nationwide, the numbers vary dramatically; many communities report zero abandoned structures. In contrast, there are 80,000 abandoned buildings in the city of Detroit, Michigan (Gold & Schwartz, 2012, p. 2).

The second research questioned asked; (b) What technical problem(s) have prevented the implementation of a vacant building inspection and marking program for the city of Rochester? There are ten core recommendations that Dunn (2000), Jones (2001), and NIOSH (2010) collectively suggested should be incorporated into a vacant building program. They include:

1. Identify the vacant and abandoned building(s) in your community.

2. Develop an inspection program that requires inspectors to monitor the properties at regular intervals.
3. Secure all vacant buildings adequately. This may require communities to enact local ordinances that require abandoned buildings to be boarded.
4. Develop preplans for the buildings that pose a significant threat to interior firefighting operations and external exposures.
5. Secure funding and demolish the dangerous structures in your jurisdiction.
6. Develop an external marking system that alerts firefighters to the potential hazards that may exist inside the structure. Warning signs should be placed next to every entrance to the structure.
7. Institute standard operating guidelines or procedures for fires that occur in vacant structures.
8. Communicate the dangers associated with a vacant building address to first responders at the time of dispatch. This information may be delivered via radio transmissions, pagers, mobile data terminals, station computers, and cell phones.
9. A notification procedure should be developed for communicating the information noted in recommendation (8) to the mutual-aid companies in the surrounding jurisdictions.
10. A training program that incorporates the dangers associated with vacant building firefighting should be delivered to all fire department personnel. Responders should be trained to properly size-up, inspect, preplan, and recognize the building marking system in their response districts.

The city of Rochester has incorporated aspects of all ten recommendations into its vacant building and marking program. Several of the program's recommendations are under review and warrant improvements.

The third research questioned asked; (c) What potential remedies can be identified and developed that may enable the city of Rochester to successfully implement a vacant building inspection and marking program? The literature review for the third research question is focused on creating solutions for the missing components of the ten core recommendations identified in question 2. Signage options, color coding, premise warning language, inspecting, and data sharing are explored.

Effective January 1, 2011, the New York State adopted Sections 311.5 thru 311.5.5 from the *2006 International Fire Code*. These code sections require placards for unsafe buildings, and specify the size, color, symbols, and location of the placards that are to be utilized when placarding vacant structures in New York State. The code requires signage that is 24 inches square. The sign must have a red background with a two inch border that is comprised of white reflective material. The code uses three different symbols, a square, a slash, and an X, to differentiate the general hazards that are present in the vacant structure. These symbols are required to be two inches in width, and made from a white reflective material (2010 Fire code of New York State, 2010). The code does not specify the type of material required for sign production, nor does it require premise warnings.

Initially, research was conducted regarding the feasibility of creating vacant building placarding signs from metal highway signage blanks. Street signs are produced in a variety of shapes, sizes, and colors. There are numerous sign manufacturers and suppliers both locally and nationwide. The idea was quickly discarded due to the concerned that the signs would be

removed from the structures by metal thieves. Metal theft is not an issue that is unique to our community or state. In an effort to discourage metal theft in New York, and across the nation; United States Senator Charles Schumer cosponsored legislation with Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN). The proposed bill would make it a federal crime to steal metal from critical infrastructure, and require documentation from sellers for a scrapper to buy metal from infrastructure, construction or utility material, a historic marker, a grave or a keg. Metal theft is a growing problem, both nationally and regionally, with examples ranging from burglaries of abandoned homes to thefts of cable wires and cemetery plaques (Schumer, 2012, p. 2).

Signage material that was made from plastic type material was also researched. Several area suppliers had products that were practical for placarding applications. Ward Engraving is a local vendor that secured the bid to produce placards for the city. They manufactured the signs from a plastic product called Sintra. The product can be purchased in a variety of sizes, colors, and thicknesses. A complete description of this product can be found on the website of Laird Plastics http://www.lairdplastics.com/content/view/267/71/ (see Appendix D).

Color coding systems for identifying and classifying vacant structures were examined. Although New York State has specific code language detailing the size and color of the signs that are to be utilized in the state; several out of state communities have been utilizing color codes to identify vacant structures in their cities. In Portsmouth, Virginia, the building bureau and fire department began a placarding program in 2009 that identifies vacant structures, and the severity of the hazards present with a three color placarding system. Vacant buildings that have been labeled green indicate that minor hazards are present. Orange placards indicate that the structure has serious problems, and caution should be exercised when entering these properties. A building that has a red placard means that the building is unstable and firefighters should not

enter the structure for interior firefighting operations (Patrick, 2010, p. 1). A standard operating procedure from the Portsmouth Fire Department entitled *Vacant Structures* has been included in the appendices (see Appendix E).

In Charleston, South Carolina, the city has within the Department of Planning, Preservation, and Sustainability a position of Director of Livability. Dan Riccio has held the position for over ten years. He oversees the city's vacant housing stock, and utilizes a color code system to track approximately 360 properties. On a map located in his office, Director Riccio uses colored coded stars to indicate the condition of the vacant properties. A green star indicates the property is in *good* condition, a yellow star for *fair* condition, and a red star indicates the property is *critical* (Bowers, 2012, p. 2).

Premise or safety warnings are often used when dispatching emergency responders to emergency scenes. These warnings can be sent to station computers, mobile data terminals, and transmitted via radio. In Cleveland, Ohio, the fire and building departments joined forces and rolled out a new vacant building marking program in 2010. One of the unique aspects of the program, grants Cleveland Fire Department battalion chiefs the authority to placard dangerous buildings immediately after a fire. The information is forwarded to the dispatch center and entered into the computer aided dispatching (CAD) system for future responses (DeCrane, 2010, p. 1).

Developing plain language premise warnings that are concise and informative can be challenging for communities. The process becomes more difficult when jurisdictions lack a formal building marking system, computer aided dispatch systems, and do not have mobile data terminals (MDTs). An attempt was made to locate jurisdictions that were only using premise warnings to alert first responders of the hazards presents at vacant structure addresses. The

author was especially looking for premise warnings that combined color codes with plain language. The search was unsuccessful.

The ability to share data regarding vacant buildings in a community is imperative. The size of a community and the number of agencies involved in the process, coupled with the number of vacant structures in a community will determine the type of data base required. A community with a small number of vacant properties and data entry terminals may find that using a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet is a satisfactory and inexpensive solution for tracking this type of data. Communities that have larger programs with multiple users will quickly discover that there are significant issues with shared workbooks in Excel, and may consider converting to a program designed for extensive data and multiple users. Microsoft Access is data base designed for a multi-user environment (White, 2012, p. 1). Communities that have information technology (IT) departments have the ability to create data bases that solve issues that arise locally. Data exchange can be a daunting task when multiple agencies are collecting and disseminating information. The author lacks the knowledge to evaluate this subject adequately, and did not research this subject extensively.

The fourth researched question asked; (d) what action items need to be created that would support the implementation of a vacant building inspection and marking system in Rochester, New York? The actions items will be discussed at length in the results section of this ARP.

Procedures

Action research was used to answer the four research questions outlined in the introduction section of the ARP. They included: (a) What adaptive challenge(s) have prevented the implementation of a vacant building inspection and marking program for the city of Rochester? (b) What technical problem(s) have prevented the implementation of a vacant

building inspection and marking program for the city of Rochester? (c) What potential remedies can be identified, and developed that may enable the city of Rochester to successfully implement a vacant building inspection and marking program? (d) What action items need to be created that would support the implementation of a vacant building inspection and marking system in Rochester, New York?

The first research question asked; (a) What adaptive challenge(s) have prevented the implementation of a vacant building inspection and marking program for the city of Rochester? The author attended the Executive Fire Officer Program's fourth year class during the month of September, 2012. The class curriculum included a unit that addressed the topic of thinking systemically. One of the unit's objectives stated that students would learn the purpose and benefits of applying systems thinking to the identification and diagnosis of adaptive challenges. The material presented in the student manual issued for the National Fire Academy's Executive *Leadership* course, classroom discussions, and required reading materials were used by the author to develop a foundation for identifying adaptive challenges. Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky (2009) text, The *Practice of Adaptive Leadership,* was required reading for the course. The book provided essential information that was used to determine if adaptive challenges were responsible for the failure to fully implement a vacant building inspection and marking program for the city of Rochester.

Further research was conducted using internet search engines; Google, Bing, and Yahoo were utilized to conduct *adaptive challenge* queries. A wealth of information concerning this subject was retrieved from the internet. The Learning Resource Center (LRC) at the National Fire Academy was also used to conduct research relating to this subject.

On May 2, 2012, the city of Rochester, filed a petition with the New York State Western Region-Code Review Board. The petition was seeking relief from a newly enacted code requirement that required unsafe vacant structures to be placarded. The city's argument was analyzed from an adaptive challenge perspective. The review board denied the variance request on August 27, 2012. The decision significantly impacted the vacant building program.

Rochester's news organizations covered the initial variance request, and its subsequent denial in August. City officials were interviewed and their comments published. Their quotes were analyzed to determine if an adaptive challenge was present.

The second research question asked; (b) What technical problem(s) have prevented the implementation of a vacant building inspection and marking program for the city of Rochester? The material presented in the student manual issued for the National Fire Academy's Executive *Leadership* course, classroom discussions, and required reading materials were used by the author to develop an understanding of the how the technical problems might influence the project. Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky (2009) writings were instrumental when discerning adaptive challenges from technical problems. Further research was conducted using internet search engines. Google, Bing and Yahoo were utilized to conduct technical problem queries. Additional information concerning this subject was retrieved from the internet and the (LRC) at the National Fire Academy.

The ten core recommendations that Dunn (2000), Jones (2001), and NIOSH (2010) emphasized as essential components of a community's vacant building program were used to measure the city of Rochester's program. Each of the ten recommendations was reviewed for the degree of compliance. A review of the 2006 and 2009 editions of the *International Fire Code* was conducted; additionally, the *2010 Fire Code of New York State* was also examined. A

review of the *Property Conservation Code of the City of Rochester* was also undertaken; this code contains a chapter that addresses vacant properties, and is referenced as *Chapter 90-17 Vacant Premise.*

The recommendations from two previous ARPs written by the author, *Vacant Buildings in Rochester, New York: Are We Adequately Addressing the Problem*, and *Implementing a Vacant Building Marking System in Rochester, New York* were also used to gauge the success and failures of the current program.

The third research question asked; (c) What potential remedies can be identified and developed that may enable the city of Rochester to successfully implement a vacant building inspection and marking program? The city's vacant building projected has been under development for several years, and involved three different administrations. Personal interviews were conducted with upper level management staff from various city departments. During this phase of the research, collaborative efforts were explored. The interviews have been cited as personnel communications and are listed in the Appendices. The following is a brief summary of the personal communications that influenced the project as potential remedies were sought:

Captain Michael Dobbertin is a member of the Rochester Fire Department and has been assigned to the department's planning and research division for several years. Captain Dobbertin's division was responsible for providing the inspection and fire response data used in Tables 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6. He was instrumental in developing the two vacant inspection programs that were utilized by line fire companies in 2012 and 2013 (M. Dobbertin, personal communication, December, 2011).

Rochester Battalion Chief Charles Stadler, was assigned to the Health and Safety Office between 2003-2005. He explored the idea of marking the city’s vacant buildings with some form

of an identification system. Chief Stadler reviewed several vacant building marking systems, and in 2004 authored a draft proposal that was submitted to the Chief's office for approval. City Hall was unwilling to approve the program, and the proposal was shelved. Chief Stadler was interviewed in December of 2012, regarding his original vacant building marking proposal (C. Stadler, personal communication, December, 2012).

Mr. Gary Kirkmere is an employee of the City of Rochester's Department of Neighborhood and Business Development and serves as the Director of Inspection and Compliance Services. His division is responsible for enforcing the building and properties codes within the city of Rochester. He is responsible for maintaining a current city wide list of vacant structures, and provided the addresses for the 2012 and 2013 vacant building inspection programs (G. Kirkmire, personal communication, December, 2012).

On March 15, 2013, Bret Garwood, the Director of Business and Housing Development was interviewed by telephone. Director Garwood provided the housing demolition information that was used to create Table 3 (B. Garwood, personal communication, March 15, 2013).

John Merklinger is the director of the Emergency Communication Department that serves the city of Rochester and Monroe County. He conducted an e-mail search in March of 2013 attempting to locate jurisdictions that were using vacant building premise warnings that included color codes (J. Merklinger, personal communication, March, 2013)

Molly Clifford, is the Director of Administration for the Rochester Fire Department. She has been actively involved in city's vacant building program and previously held the position of Director of the Neighborhood Service Centers for the city of Rochester. She has provided valuable insight and direction throughout this project.

Salvatore Mitrano was appointed Fire Chief of the Rochester Fire Department on November 9, 2012. He previously held the position of Executive Deputy Chief and was responsible for oversight of the department's inspection programs. He was consulted throughout the project (S. Mitrano, III, personal communication, March, 2013).

The fourth research question asked; (d) What action items need to be created that would support the implementation of a vacant building inspection and marking system in Rochester, New York? The author used the ten core recommendations that Dunn (2000), Jones (2001), and NIOSH (2010) suggested to evaluate the status of Rochester's program. Each recommendation was individually examined for its degree of compliance. Action items were developed for the recommendations that were lacking essential components.

The author had the ability to evaluate two inspection cycles; one in 2012, and the other in 2013. Several lessons were learned through the trial and error process. The data collected from both inspection programs was used to evaluate the program's successes and failures.

Several of the author's recommendations are presented on pages 55-58 of this ARP; many were derived from the process of trial an error. The experience of conducting two separate inspection runs influenced the author's recommendations.

A meeting was held on the morning of March 19, 2013, at the city's Public Safety Building. Representatives from numerous city departments were present. The purpose of the meeting was to review the current status of the city's vacant building program, and initiate suggestions to improve it. The names of the attendees and the minutes from the meeting are documented in the appendices (see Appendix K).

The following limitations are noted: The author relied on the recommendations from Dunn (2000), Jones (2001), and NIOSH (2010), for the ten core recommendations that communities should include in a vacant building inspection and marking program. The list could include additional recommendations.

A search was conducted with the intent of determining if the city of Rochester was the only municipality in the country using a combination of color coded premise warnings and placards to warn first responders of the hazards that exist in the vacant structures in their communities. Further research should be conducted regarding this subject. In retrospect, a survey that included all of the country's dispatching centers would have enhanced the results.

Results

The research revealed that the city of Rochester has a viable vacant building marking and inspection program. A solid foundation has been laid, and a blueprint for future improvements exists. The four research questions were designed to evaluate the status of a program that was not fully implemented, and to create solutions to the barriers that were discovered. Although considerable work has been completed, future upgrades to the program are needed.

The first research asked; (a) What adaptive challenge(s) have prevented the implementation of a vacant building and marking program for the city of Rochester? The results revealed that identifying vacant buildings with placards within the city of Rochester was deemed an unacceptable requirement by the city administration following the adoption of new code language that was enacted by the State of New York on January 1, 2011. The new code - *19 NYCRR Part 1225, The Fire Code of New York State, Section 311.5* requires unsafe buildings to be placarded. The city sought relief from the newly enacted legislation, and on May 2, 2012, the city filed a petition with the Western Region- Buffalo Board of Review, requesting a variance

from the placarding section of the fire code. The specific code and section have been placed in the Appendices (see Appendix B).

The city argued that the new code regulations were equivalent to an unfunded state mandate, and estimated that the placarding and inspecting requirements would cost the city approximately a million dollars a year to comply. The city further argued that its current vacant building inspection program had identified the unsafe structures in the city, and a color-coded premise warning system designed to differentiate the hazards was in place. The Emergency Communication Department (911 Dispatch Center) was advising responding companies via radio transmissions, and (MDTs) of the hazards associated with the vacant address they were dispatched to. In essence, the city argued that the premise warning information available to first responders upon dispatch was a valid alternative to the placarding requirement.

The Board of Review conducted a hearing on the matter on May 17, 2012, in Buffalo, New York. A decision was rendered on August 27, 2012; the Review Board denied the petition (see Appendix L).

The second research question asked; (b) What technical problem(s) have prevented the implementation of a vacant building inspection and marking program for the city of Rochester? Dunn (2000), Jones (2001), and NIOSH (2010) collectively suggested that a vacant building program should incorporate the following ten recommendations:

1. Identify the vacant and abandoned building(s) in your community.
2. Develop an inspection program that requires inspectors to monitor the properties at regular intervals.
3. Secure all vacant buildings adequately; this may require communities to enact local ordinances that require abandoned buildings to be boarded.

4. Develop preplans for the buildings that pose a significant threat to interior firefighting operations and external exposures.

5. Secure funding and demolish the dangerous structures in your jurisdiction.

6. Develop an external marking system that alerts firefighters to the potential hazards that may exist inside the structure. Warning signs should be placed next to every entrance to the structure.

7. Institute standard operating guidelines or procedures for fires that occur in vacant structures.

8. Communicate the dangers associated with a vacant building address to first responders at the time of dispatch. This information may be delivered via radio transmissions, pagers, mobile data terminals, station computers, and cell phones from the dispatching agency.

9. A notification procedure should be developed for communicating the information noted in recommendation (8) to the mutual-aid companies in the surrounding jurisdictions.

10. A training program that incorporates the dangers associated with vacant building firefighting should be delivered to all fire department personnel. Responders should be trained to properly size-up, inspect, preplan, and recognize the building marking system in their response districts.

The results revealed that the city of Rochester has addressed each of the ten recommendations in whole or part. The first recommendation instructs communities to identify the vacant structures in their jurisdiction. The city of Rochester has a local property code entitled *Property Conservation Code of the City of Rochester, New York.* The code has a chapter that specifically addresses vacant buildings and property, and is indexed has *Chapter 90-17 Vacant Properties* (Property Code, 1964/1979). Chapter 90 requires the Commissioner

of the Neighborhood and Business Development (NBD) Department to maintain a list of all the vacant properties in the city.

The Bureau of Inspection and Compliance Services is responsible for maintaining the city wide list of vacant properties. In December of 2011, a list containing 2525 vacant addresses was provided to the RFD. Line companies began inspecting vacant properties during the spring of 2012. The purpose of the inspections was to place each vacant property into one of three hazard categories. The inspection information was used to create premise warnings for each address, and develop a data base for a future placard order. The first round of inspections was completed in July of 2012.

The process was repeated in December of 2012 when an updated list of vacant properties was provided to the RFD. The new list contained 2115 addresses that were privately owned, and 353 properties that the city obtained through foreclosure of tax liens. Line companies began inspecting the 2115 properties in January of 2013. The 353 city owned properties were placed on a demolition list and were not inspected by RFD members. Type red premise warnings were immediately placed on the city owned addresses. Tables 4 and 6 provide an illustration of the numbers and categories of the each inspection run (see pages 44 and 46).

The second recommendation suggests that communities create an inspection program that includes frequent inspections. The RFD line companies currently inspect each property once a year. The purpose of the fire department visit is to inspect the building from a firefighting perspective, an assign a hazard classification to the structure. The hazard classification information is used to create the premise warning and placarding requests for the property. City building inspectors are required to continually monitor the vacant properties in their

assigned districts. Each vacant property is inspected at least once every three weeks (Kirkmire, 2012, p. 1).

The third recommendation asks communities to secure vacant properties, and when necessary enact ordinances requiring vacant structures to be boarded. The city of Rochester's property code has a provision that requires vacant building owners to secure the building in a manner that prevents unauthorized entry. Additionally, the code gives the Commissioner the right to issue an order to secure. See below:

> Order To Secure: The Commissioner may order the immediate securing of a vacant structure or portion thereof to prevent unauthorized entry when the same is deemed necessary to protect against arson, drug usage and other illegal activities at the structure or in order to provide for the health, safety or welfare of any remaining occupants of the structure and neighboring residents. The costs of the securing shall be a personal liability of the property owner, who shall be billed therefore. Such costs shall also be a lien upon the property from the first day the costs are billed to the owner. Such costs, if not paid, may be added to a subsequent tax bill for the property pursuant to § 6-94 of the City Charter (Property Code, 1964/1979).

The fourth recommendation suggests that communities develop preplans for buildings that pose a significant threat to interior firefighting operations and external exposures. The RFD is partially complying with this recommendation. Line company officers complete an inspection form for each new vacant inspection. The form has provisions for collecting preplan information; the type of building and the dimensions of the structure are recorded. The status of the utilities is logged, and the general condition of the structure is noted. The structure's hazard classification is also determined. RFD policy requires company officers to request a battalion chief to the address of a vacant property that they have inspected and classified as a *Type Red Do Not Enter* property. A copy of the vacant building inspection form (RFD 10010), has been placed in the Appendices for review (see Appendix M).

The fifth recommendation asks communities to secure funding and demolish the dangerous structures in their jurisdiction. The city of Rochester has been demolishing vacant for decades. Table 3 is an illustration of the number of vacant buildings demolished in the city from 1975-2012. The numbers vary significantly. The high occurred in 1978-79, when 366 properties were torn down; only 31 properties were demolished in 1989-90.

The 2012-2013 city budget significantly increased the funding allocation for vacant building demolitions; the additional funding measure will allow for the demolition of approximately 300-350 properties (City of Rochester, 2012-2013, p. 6-11). The city's fiscal year ends on June 30th and actual number of demolitions has been estimated based on funding dollars.

The 2013-2014 city budget has not been approved and is currently in a draft format. The proposed budget has funding provisions that will accelerate the number of demolitions of city and privately owned vacant structures to 500-600 units per year. An ordinance passed by City Council on December 20, 2012, appropriated $9,000,000 (to be issued in bonds) for the purpose of vacant building demolitions over the next several years (Rochester City Council, 2012, p. 5).

Table 3

CITY CONTRACTED DEMOLITIONS

Fiscal Year	Structures
1975-76	244
1976-77	235
1977-78	196
1978-79	366
1979-80	284

Fiscal Year	Structures
1980-81	244
1981-82	136
1982-83	150
1983-84	96
1984/85	92
1985/86	68
1986/87	61
1987/88	41
1988/89	35
1989/90	31
1990/91	52
1991/92	59
1992/93	63
1993/94	131
1994/95	131
1995/96	105
1996/97	125
1997/98	137
1998/99	157
1999/00	176
2000/01	150
2001/02	183
2002/03	205
2003/04	93
2004/05	140
2005/06	204
2006/07	282
2007/08	156
2008/09	145
2009/10	206

Fiscal Year	Structures
2010/11	176
2011/12	130
2012/13(Budgeted)	300-350

Source: City of Rochester- Neighborhood and Business Development 2013.

The sixth recommendation instructs communities to develop an external marking system that alerts firefighters to the potential hazards that may exist inside the structure. Warning signs should be placed next to every entrance to the structure. This recommendation became binding in New York State on January 1, 2011, after the state adopted sections 311.5 thru 311.5.5 from the *2006 International Fire Code*. These code sections require placards for unsafe buildings, and specify the size, color, symbols, and location of the placards that are to be utilized when placarding vacant structures in New York State (2010 Fire code of New York State, 2010). The city of Rochester began placarding vacant structures in December of 2012.

The seventh recommendation suggests that fire departments institute standard operating guidelines or procedures for fires that occur in vacant structures. The RFD has a standard operating guideline for vacant building structure fires. A copy of the SOG has been placed in the Appendices (see Appendix N).

The eighth recommendation advises fire departments to communicate the dangers associated with a vacant building address to first responders at the time of dispatch. The information may be delivered via radio transmissions, pagers, mobile data terminals, station computers, and cell phones from the dispatching agency.

Although the state fire code does not require the creation of premise warnings for vacant buildings, the city supported this concept. In fact, one of the primary arguments put forth in the variance petition submitted to the state on May 2, 2012, was the belief that premise warnings

issued at the time of dispatch provided an adequate warning of the existing dangers that first responders may encounter, and placarding vacant structures was unnecessary.

During a classroom discussion regarding the topic of premise warnings, and the language that should be utilized to convey the warning information to responding firefighters; a suggestion was put forth by a Rochester firefighter named Mark Glover. The instructor displayed a slide from a Power Point presentation that depicted three individual traffic signal lights; each of the three traffic signals were displaying a different color starting with the color green, then yellow, and finally red. The author was using the slide to suggest that the departments' fire ground tactics at vacant building fires should emulate the warnings that a traffic signal gives a motorist. Firefighter Glover suggested that the premise warnings incorporate the same color scheme. A combination of language and color was utilized to create the following premise warnings:

- VACANT / NO UNUSUAL HAZARDS (Type GREEN)
- VACANT / HAZARDOUS CONDITIONS PRESENT (Type YELLOW)
- VACANT/ CONFIRMED DO NOT ENTER (Type RED)

The ninth recommendation asks jurisdictions that instituted a vacant building marking program to inform the surrounding communities of their program. On January 30, 2013, Rochester Fire Chief Salvatore Mitrano delivered a presentation to the members of the Monroe County Executive Fire Chiefs Association held in Rochester, New York. The presentation detailed the city's vacant building program, including the premise warning component.

The tenth recommendation suggests that a training program that incorporates the dangers associated with vacant building firefighting be developed, and delivered to all fire department personnel. Responders should be trained to properly size-up, inspect, preplan, and recognize the building marking system in their response districts. In December of 2011, the author developed

a two hour training program that met the suggested training requirement; 28 individual presentations were delivered to the line division of the Rochester Fire Department during the months of January, February, and March of 2012. The RFD currently has 438 firefighters and officers assigned to operations. The training class was entitled *Vacant Building Awareness, Firefighting Strategies & Tactics, and Inspection Procedures* and included the following course description:

> Course Description: The course will provide a general overview of the vacant building problem with in the City of Rochester. A review of the national trends regarding firefighter safety issues while operating at vacant building fires will be presented, including recommendations from NIOSH, The United States Fire Administration, and subject matter experts. New and revised Standard Operating Guidelines will be presented and reviewed. The procedures for inspecting vacant buildings will be summarized; including the use of RFD Form 10010 (new) and recording protocols. Classroom discussion is encouraged and Command Staff are invited to participate in each session. (see Appendix O).

The third research question asked; (c) What potential remedies can be identified and developed that may enable the city of Rochester to successfully implement a vacant building inspection and marking program? The results revealed that solutions to several fundamental problems needed to be solved before for the program could be fully implemented. The primary focus centered on the placarding requirement. The first round of vacant building inspections were completed by RFD Line Division companies in 2012. This provided the necessary data to begin the bid proposal for a placard order. A decision was made to purchase 1,200 placards at a cost of $14.85 each; the initial order totaled $17,820.00 and was supplied by a local vendor. The decision to purchase plastic signage was driven by cost, and the concern over the metal theft issue. The signs were made from a product call Sintra. The product can be purchased in in various thicknesses; our signs were made from sheet stock that was 3 mm or 1/8 inch thick. A copy of the purchase order has been placed in the Appendices (see Appendix D).

The second issue that needed to be solved was the installation of the placards. The city's Department of Environmental Services (DES) employees were assigned the task of installing the placards. This department is also tasked with the vacant building board-up responsibilities. Communities with strong union affiliations need to consider the various job descriptions and titles that exist within their workforce, and assign work to the appropriate union shop. DES employees assigned to the tasks listed above, work a typical Monday through Friday day schedule, and are unavailable during nights and weekends. To solve this issue, the fire department's chief officers were given a small number of *Type Red, Confirm Do Not Enter* placards to be used under emergency conditions. Battalion chiefs were given the authority to placard unsafe buildings, and place the appropriate premises warnings on the property before leaving an emergency scene. Both practices ensure that critical information is available to first responders in the event of another response to the same location.

The ability to record, share, and track the information generated from the vacant building program became the most problematic issue to date. This situation has not been adequately solved, but a temporary solution has been formatted. The RFD uses a local company, Alpine Software Corporation for its information management system (Schenkel, 2012, p. 1). The software package has an inspection module that is used for the department's building inspection program. This data base application was used for the first round of vacant building inspections that were concluded during the month of July, 2012. Unfortunately, the other city departments that require information sharing do not have access to this program. A Microsoft Excel spreadsheet was developed for the 2013 inspection program. The spreadsheet allows for information sharing, however the program is not adequate for the department's multiple user's needs. A system upgrade is warranted and under review.

The fourth research question asked; (d) What action items need to be created that would support the implementation of a vacant building inspection and marking system in Rochester, New York? The following action actions were developed for this ARP:

1. The first of two separate vacant building inspections programs was developed using the department's current inspection software program *Red Alert*, developed by Alpine Software Corporation. The program was created for the 2012 inspection season and included the data entry of 2525 vacant building addresses that were provided by the city's Bureau of Inspection and Compliance. RFD line companies began inspecting vacant properties in March of 2012 and completed the first round of inspections in July of 2012. The results are expressed in Table 4.

Table 4

2012 Rochester Fire Department Vacant Building Inspection Results

Inspection Type	Number of Properties
Green - No Unusual Hazards	726
Yellow- Hazardous Conditions Present	1199
Red- Confirmed Do Not Enter	150
Total:	2,077

- The Bureau of Inspection and Compliance supplied the author with 2525 addresses in December of 2011. The duration of the first round of inspections was approximately a three month interval from April 2012-July 2012. During that time frame 448 properties required a status changed; these properties were rehabilitated, sold, or demolished.

- These results do not include additional vacant properties that were reported during the last six months of 2012.

- A total of 2,077 vacant building premise warnings were placed in the 911 Center's CAD system.

2. The first round of inspections provided valuable insight and the decision to create another venue for recording vacant buildings using a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet was formulated. The author created 20 separate vacant building inspection districts; one for each of the department's line companies. The bulk of the vacant buildings in the city are located in a geographic area called the *crescent*. Fire companies with fire due responses in the *crescent* had a disproportionately number of vacant building inspections. The new inspection districts balanced the workload (see Table 5). Creating another inspection program was a time consuming endeavor because the vacant addresses are not in a mapping program. An inspection map was created for each company (see Appendix P).

Table 5

Vacant Building Inspection Comparison 2012-2013

Fire Company	2012 Inspections	2013 Inspections
Engine 1	20	83
Engine 2	371	153
Engine 3	88	65
Engine 5	213	136
Engine 7	218	130
Engine 8	5	0
Engine 9	325	159
Engine 10	73	127
Engine 12	93	66
Engine 13	134	113
Engine 16	281	146
Engine 17	44	137
Engine 19	39	40
Truck 2	258	121
Truck 3	42	60

Fire Company	2012 Inspections	2013 Inspections
Truck 4	11	126
Truck 5	187	131
Truck 6	8	148
Truck 10	45	123
Rescue 11	11	51

3. A new inspection format was developed for 2013. A Microsoft Excel spreadsheet was created, and the city's Bureau of Inspection and Compliance provided the author with an updated list of vacant properties in December of 2012. The list included 2115 privately owned properties and 353 city owned properties (see Appendix Q). The city owned properties were slated for demolition and fire companies were not required to inspect them. These properties were immediately given *Type RED Confirmed Do Not Enter* premise warnings and placed in a separate queue for reference only. Line companies began inspecting in January of 2013. Companies were given three months to complete their initial round of inspections. The 2013 results have been placed in Table 6.

Table 6

2013 Rochester Fire Department Vacant Building Inspection Results

Inspection Type	Number of Properties
Green - No Unusual Hazards	776
Yellow- Hazardous Conditions Present	978
Red- Confirmed Do Not Enter (private)	88
Red- Confirmed Do Not Enter (city owned)	353
Total:	2,195
Vacant Properties: (re-occupied)	196
Vacant Properties: (demolished)	22
Vacant Properties left to inspect:	55

- The Bureau of Inspection and Compliance supplied the author with 2466 addresses in December of 2012. The second round of inspections was conducted from January 2013-March 2013. Companies will continue to inspect new vacant properties throughout the year.
- 218 properties were rehabilitated or torn down.
- A total of 2,195 vacant building premise warnings were place in the 911 Center's CAD system as of March 25, 2013.

4. As of March, 25, 2013, total of 2060 properties were inspected; 441 properties were given a *Type RED Do Not Enter* hazard classification. The 353 city owned vacant properties were placarded by March of 2013; 88 privately owned structures have been scheduled for placarding beginning in April.
5. A new RFD Vacant Building Inspection Standard Operating Guideline was written (see Appendix R).
6. A vacant building inspection instruction manual was developed and distributed (see Appendix S).
7. A Rochester Fire Department Inspection Directive was issued on December, 13, 2012 (see Appendix T).
8. A page from the 2012 Red Alert Inspection program has been placed in the Appendix U. Line companies inspected 2525 addresses. This data base was replaced with a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet for 2013 (see Appendix Q).

Discussion

The first research question asked; (a) What adaptive challenge(s) have prevented the implementation of a vacant building inspection and marking program for the city of Rochester? The decision to identify the city's vacant buildings with an external symbol, sign, or placard was

clearly an adaptive challenge. The issue has historic significance dating back to 2003, when the first request to spray paint warning markings on the city's vacant structures was requested by the RFD's Health and Safety Office. The FDNY and the Buffalo Fire Department were engaged in similar practices; marking their vacant structures with a series of symbols that resembled a square, a slash, and an (X), to differentiate the various hazardous conditions present. The local proposal was turned down primarily because of the graffiti-like nature of using spray paint to mark the buildings. Several years later, the topic resurfaced and the city administration approved a program to mark vacant structures with signage that was one foot square, neat in appearance, and used aluminum sign blanks that were painted with a florescent color (McMillan, 2011, p. 44). Just prior to the implementation of that marking program, the city became aware that New York State was adopting a section of the 2006 *International Fire Code* that required vacant buildings to be placarded with signs that were two foot square and the symbols placed on a red background. The placarding component of the program was scrapped, and the decision to placard buildings according to the new code was tabled for future discussions.

The new code requirement became effective January 1, 2011 (2010 Fire Code of New York State, 2010). City officials decided not to immediately comply with placarding requirement. Portions of a vacant building and inspections program were already in place; one of the highlights of the program was a new color coded premise warning system that used traffic light colors to differentiate hazard classifications. The city's plan was to substitute premise warnings delivered at the time of dispatch for signage. This created local controversy, especially with the city's fire fighter union, IAFF Local 1071 ("City, Firefighters At Odds Over Placards," 2012).

On May 2, 2012, the city applied for a code variance seeking relief from *19 NYCRR Part 1225, The Fire Code of New York State, Section 311.5*. This section of the code addresses the placarding requirement. The variance request was eventually denied and the city decided to move forward and comply with the placard requirement.

In retrospect, the decision to finally placard the city's vacant structures evolved over a ten year period. Three separate city administrations, three different fire chiefs, and several new city council members had the opportunity to voice their opinions and concerns regarding this controversial subject. The city's decision to request a variance that substituted premise warnings for placards was valid. Rochester had a model vacant building program in place prior to the submission of the variance request; nine of the ten recommendations suggested by Dunn (2000), Jones (2001), and NIOSH (2010) had been implemented. The city of Syracuse, New York has a similar number of vacant buildings, and has elected not to placard their vacant buildings. The Syracuse Fire Department will continue to inspect their city's vacant structures weekly; as well as relying on premise warning notifications according to Syracuse Deputy Fire Chief Steve Cavuto (Sharp, 2011, p. 6A) .

Prior to the adoption *The 2010 Fire Code of New York State,* one of the most significant objections to marking vacant buildings with spray painted locally, was the graffiti like appearance that was created with this type of venue. After the state adopted *The 2010 Fire Code of New York State*, the focus changed to the *scarlet letter* syndrome ("City, Firefighters At Odds Over Placards," 2012, p. 1B). Both points of views have legitimate concerns. The author has always believed that a building that is boarded according to code, visually projects the appearance that the structure is vacant. This becomes even more evident when fire damage is visible on the exterior of the structure. Under these conditions, a placard would not be the sole

entity responsible for identifying the structure as vacant. A vacant structure that has no visible signs of fire damage or structural instability, and has not been boarded, may blend in with the neighborhood. Placing a large red placard or spray painting symbols on these homes would certainly generate significant attention, and broadcast the fact that the property was uninhabited. This would bolster the scarlet letter argument.

The second research questions asked; (b) What technical problem(s) have prevented the implementation of a vacant building inspection and marking program for the city of Rochester? Ten core recommendations were detailed in the Results section, and recommendations 1, 2, 3, 7, and 10 have been adequately solved and do not warrant further discussion. They are listed below for reference.

1. Identify the vacant and abandoned building(s) in your community.
2. Develop an inspection program that requires inspectors to monitor the properties at regular intervals.
3. Secure all vacant buildings adequately; this may require communities to enact local ordinances that require abandoned buildings to be boarded.
7. Institute standard operating guidelines or procedures for fires that occur in vacant structures.
10. A training program that incorporates the dangers associated with vacant building firefighting should be delivered to all fire department personnel. Responders should be trained to properly size-up, inspect, preplan, and recognize the building marking system in their response districts.

The fourth recommendation: *Develop preplans for the buildings that pose a significant threat to interior firefighting operations and external exposures;* was identified as an area of

weakness. Preplanning buildings in large communities is a time consuming and a manpower intensive task. The process was in the forefront when the RFD began looking at accreditation. This important recommendation deserves further attention.

The fifth recommendation: *Secure funding and demolish the dangerous structures in your jurisdiction*; has substantially been addressed. The costs associated with completing fulfilling this recommendation are excessive. Several years ago, the demolition costs for a typical two and one-half story wood frame home in the city of Rochester averaged $20,400.00 (McMillan, 2011). Currently, the city estimates that number at $25,000.00 (City of Rochester, 2013, p. 1). Several years ago the city had close to 3000 vacant buildings. The numbers have remained stagnant, despite the fact that a city was demolishing between 150 -200 structures a year (McMillan, 2011, p. 7). The 2012-13 city budget provided additional funding for vacant building demolitions; the projected numbers are between 300-350 structures (see Table 5). Rochester's City Council approved the issuance of $9,000,000.00 in bonds for the demolition of additional vacant buildings in December, 2012 (Rochester City Council, 2012, p. 5). The city's administration has clearly indicated that they are committed to reducing the number of vacant properties in city neighborhoods.

The sixth recommendation: *Develop an external marking system that alerts firefighters to the potential hazards that may exist inside the structure. Warning signs should be placed next to every entrance to the structure*, is currently being implemented. DES employees began placarding 353 city owned vacant properties in December of 2012. City owned vacant structures that were scheduled for demolition were placarded first. In most cases, these properties represented the most dangerous structures in the city. A press conference was held on December 12, 2012, and all the local media outlets reported the story. Rochester's News

10 published the story on its website (Conception, December, p. 1). This event was symbolic and represented the collective efforts of many city employees who shared a vision of reducing the overall vacant building footprint within the city and identifying the remaining structures with a model program that enhances employee safety.

The eighth recommendation: *Communicate the dangers associated with a vacant building address to first responders at the time of dispatch. This information may be delivered via radio transmissions, pagers, mobile data terminals, station computers, and cell phone from the dispatching agency,* is the centerpiece of this ARP. When coupled with the placarding component, first responders have an excellent warning system that provides vital information to units responding to vacant building addresses. Distributing the hazard information associated with a vacant building response in several venues ensures that this crucial information is delivered. Rochester firefighters are currently receiving vacant building information via radio transmissions at the time of dispatch, department issued pagers, station computers, MDTs, and personal cellphone that have a paging app. We have exceeded this recommendation.

The ninth recommendation: *develop a notification method for communicating the information noted in recommendation (8) to the mutual-aid companies in the surrounding jurisdictions.* This item deserves some additional attention. All mutual aid companies that are dispatched into the city receive the same premise warning information from the 911 Center that RFD companies currently receive. An informational brochure was created as an action item for a previous ARP that was written by this author (McMillan, 2011, p. 77). Updating the brochure and distributing it to the first responders in our county would be a worthwhile venture; implementing the colored coded vacant building premise warnings

system through-out Monroe County should be presented to the members of the Monroe County Executive Fire Chiefs Association at a future meeting.

The third research question asked; (c) What potential remedies can be identified and developed that may enable the city of Rochester to successfully implement a vacant building inspection and marking program? The decision to purchase signage material that was made from closed cell polyvinyl chloride sheets was a cost effective alternative to metal traffic signs. The metal theft issue was eliminated and 1200 signs were purchase for a total cost of $17,820.00. The signs are significantly lighter than a metal alternative and can be reused. Communities exploring signage options should consider Sintra or a similar product. The material costs associated with placarding a single residential house with three entrances is slightly more than $50.00. Hopefully, placarding the city's most dangerous structures will result in preventing future fire ground injuries, and provide significant cost savings for Rochester's taxpayers.

One of the highlights of this ARP was developing the concept of using a combination of plain language and color codes to create premise warnings for dispatchers to utilize when dispatching first responders to vacant building addresses. These premise warnings provide another layer of protection that is not required by the New York State code. The city's decision to incorporate them into their vacant building program was voluntary. The author strongly believes that they have significant value, and if given the choice; would incorporate premise warnings into a vacant building program before placarding. The city of Rochester benefits from both. Premise warnings are inexpensive, informative, and provide a descriptive association to placards. When a fire dispatcher voices out this premise warming; "*This address is a Type Red Vacant / Confirm Do Not Enter*, firefighters are attentive.

The ability to record, share, and track the information generated from the vacant building program became a nightmare for the program. The data entry requirements are extensive, and maintaining an accurate list that is dynamic in nature is extremely challenging. The most significant challenge for this program is developing a data base that allows every agency involved in the program to share updated vacant building information in timely fashion. Communities that are considering a program of this magnitude should focus considerable energy on this issue.

The fourth research question asked; (d) What action items need to be created that would support the implementation of a vacant building inspection and marking system in Rochester, New York? The action items created for this ARP were based on the ten core fundamental recommendations that Dunn (2000), Jones (2001), and NIOSH (2010) suggested are included in a vacant building inspection and marking program. The city of Rochester has a model program that other communities could emulate and improve upon.

The author is aware of the fiscal crisis that many of the nation's cities are facing. Implementing all ten recommendations may not be financially feasible in communities that having been laying off their workforce and are struggling to survive. Many of the recommendations have minimal budgetary impacts and are worth pursuing. They have been prioritized in the Recommendation section of this paper.

The city of Rochester has committed significant resources towards solving the chronic vacant building problem in our community. The last piece of the puzzle was the placarding component. The author believes that the decision to aggressively address all ten core recommendations has enhanced the safety of our citizens and the city's workforce.

Recommendations

The author believes that the ten core recommendations suggested by Dunn (2000), Jones (2001), and NIOSH (2010), provides a solid foundation for communities to establish a viable building marking and inspection program. Recognizing that some cities may not have the financial capability to incorporate all ten recommendations, especially communities burdened with significant numbers of vacant properties; the author suggests that the following recommendations be implemented based on their financial impacts:

Minimal Financial Impacts

- Identify the vacant and abandoned building(s) in your community.
- Develop preplans for the buildings that pose a significant threat to interior firefighting operations and external exposures.
- Develop standard operating guidelines or procedures for fires that occur in vacant structures.
- Create a training program that clearly illustrates the dangers associated with vacant building firefighting and delivered it to all fire department personnel.
- Communicate the dangers associated with a vacant building address to first responders at the time of dispatch. Premise warning information may be delivered via radio transmissions, pagers, mobile data terminals, station computers, and cell phones from the dispatching agency. Consider using a combination of plain language and a color code.
- Educate your neighboring responders.

As funding streams become available, incorporate the balance of the recommendations into your overall program. These include:

Moderate Financial Impacts

- Develop an inspection program that requires inspectors to monitor the properties at regular intervals.
- Secure all vacant buildings adequately; this may require communities to enact local ordinances that require abandoned buildings to be boarded.
- Develop an external building marking system that alerts firefighters to the potential hazards that may exist inside the structure. Consider adopting the placarding requirements from Sections 311.5 thru 311.5.5 of the 2006 International Fire Code.

Significant Financial Impacts

- Demolish the unsafe structure in your community.

The following recommendations are derived from the lessons learned while developing the vacant building and inspection program for the city of Rochester. The process began nearly ten years ago, and the program will require periodic adjustments and continued innovation. These local recommendations may not have universal application:

- Create inspection data bases that meet the programs overall needs. This includes the ability to share inspection data among multiple agencies in a timely manner. Maintain a vacant building list that is current. Ensure that premise warning information at the time of dispatch is accurate.
- Incorporate GIS into your program. Mapping vacant structures in your community will be a valuable asset.
- Define inspection roles and responsibility. Especially if multiple agencies are involved in this process.

- Consult with union officials if applicable in your jurisdiction.
- Establish relationships with the commercial board-up companies in your geographic area.
- Research sign vendors and consider using a product that is durable, inexpensive, and reusable. Consider the metal theft issue if metal signage is purchased.
- Have a policy that allows fire department representatives to placard, and place premise warnings on vacant buildings prior to leaving an emergency scene.
- Create an informational brochure that describes the program, and distributed to local responders.
- Maintain a yearly training requirement.
- Ensure that your organization as written procedures concerning your vacant program, and that they are periodically reviewed.

In closing, the author believes that first responders should be informed at the time of dispatch of the potential hazards associated with the vacant buildings in their response districts. Most communities have the ability to implement one or more of the ten core recommendations that Dunn (2000), Jones (2001), and NIOSH (2010) have suggested. The author highly recommends incorporating premise warnings into every vacant building program. The color coded system currently practiced in Rochester, New York is worth considering.

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Appendix A

Personal Communication

Michael Dobbertin, is a captain with the city of Rochester Fire Department and is currently assigned to the Planning and Research Division. He is a confidential employee and supervises the entire division; he is responsible for collecting and maintaining data relating to fire response, fire investigation, inspections, and is the RFD's 911 Center liaison.

Captain Dobbertin was instrumental in developing two separate inspection programs, and assisted the author with data collection on a weekly basis. Captain Dobbertin provided biweekly updates of premise warning information to the Monroe County 911 Center.

He was interviewed on several occasions during 2012, and was asked to provide data for this report. He provided the information reported in Tables 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6 and Appendix Q. Captain Dobbertin's office is located on the sixth floor the Public Safety Building, Rochester, New York. He can be reached at the following phone number (585) 428-3697 and the mailing address is:

City of Rochester Fire Department

185 Exchange Blvd. Suite 660

Rochester, New York, 14614

Appendix B

2010 Fire Code of New York State

Section 311.5

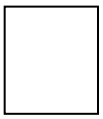
311.5 Placards Any building or structure determined to be unsafe pursuant to Section 10 of this code shall be marked as required by Sections 311.1 through 311.5.

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 the penthouse.

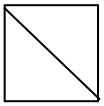
311.5.2 Placard size and color. Placards shall be 24 inches by 24 inches (610 mm by 610 mm) in size with a red background, white reflective stripes and a white reflective border. The stripes and border shall have a 2-inch (51 mm) stroke.

311.5.3 Placard date. Placards shall bear the date of their application and the date of the most recent inspection.

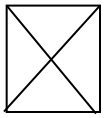
311.5.4 Placard symbols. The design of the placards shall use the following symbols:



1. This symbol shall mean that the structure had normal structural conditions at the time of marking.



2. This symbol shall mean that structural or interior hazards exist and interior firefighting 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 firefighting to exterior operations only, with entry only occurring for known life hazards.

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

Appendix C

Personal Communication

Charles Stadler is a 28 year veteran of the Rochester Fire Department. In 2003, he was promoted to the rank of battalion chief, and assigned to the department's Health and Safety office. Chief Stadler recognized the dangers associated with vacant building firefighting. He submitted a proposal to Fire Chief Floyd Madison, requesting permission to allow the city's firefighters to begin marking vacant structures with a series of spray painted symbols that depicted the hazards in the vacant structures. The FDNY, and the Buffalo Fire Department were using similar programs. Chief Stadler had obtained standard operating guidelines from both departments and submitted them along with his original request. His proposal was denied. He was interviewed during the month of November of 2012.

Chief Stadler currently is assigned to RFD's Battalion Two. He can be reached at the following phone number: Battalion 2 (585) 428-5974.

Appendix D

Ward Engraving is a local Rochester company. They have a contract with the city of Rochester and manufacture signs for several city departments. They were awarded the contract to produce vacant placards for the city. A copy of the invoice is displayed on the next page.

They manufactured the signs using a product called Sintra. Vacant placard signs were made from material that was 1/8" or 3 mm in thickness. A description of this product can be found on the website of Laird Plastics http://www.lairdplastics.com/content/view/267/71/. They manufacture the Sintra product.

Contact information for Ward Engraving:

Ward Engraving

4842 East River Road

Henrietta, New York 14586

(585) 334-8481

City of Rochester
Rochester, New York 14614-1280
FAX: (585) 428-6038

ORIGINAL

Purchase Order

Fiscal Year 2013 Page 1 of 1

Questions about this order should be referred to the city contact shown below unless instructed otherwise in text of the order.

THIS NUMBER MUST APPEAR ON ALL INVOICES, PACKAGES AND SHIPPING PAPERS.
Purchase Order # 13004299-00

BILL TO
RFD ADMINISTRATION
ROCHESTER FIRE DEPARTMENT
185 EXCHANGE BLVD., ROOM 665
ROCHESTER NY 14614

VENDOR
WARD'S ENGRAVING
4842 EAST RIVER ROAD
WEST HENRIETTA NY 14586

SHIP TO
See Shipping Information Below

Buyer Contact Phone Number and Fax Number		Requisition Number	Buyer Contact
(585) 428-7041	(585) 428-6038	5090	Macon, Tammy

Date Ordered	Vendor Number	Date Required	Freight Method/Terms	Ordering Department
12/05/2012	246		F.O.B.	OFFICE OF THE CHIEF

Item#	Description/Part No.	Qty	UOM	Unit Price	Extended Price
	BANNERS, PENNANTS, AND DECORAT				
	The Above Purchase Order Number Must Appear On All Correspondence - Packing Sheets And Bills Of Lading				
1	VACANT MARKING PLACARDS	1200.0	EACH	$14.850	$17,820.00
	Ship To: *ATTN: KATHY MCMANUS* *RFD ADMINISTRATION, ROCHESTER FIRE DEPARTMENT, 185 EXCHANGE BLVD., ROOM 665* *ROCHESTER NY 14614* *Phone: 585-428-6739 Fax:*				
	PER CITY CONTRACT 124287				
	QUESTIONS CONTACT KATHY MCMANUS 428-3674				

By _____ Purchasing Agent or Delegate

By _____ Director of Finance

VENDOR COPY

PO Total **$17,820.00**

Appendix E

PORTSMOUTH FIRE DEPARTMENT

Standard Operating Procedure No. 403

VACANT STRUCTURES

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Standard Operation Procedure for Unsafe Conditions Placard is to provide a standard notification procedure to safeguard life and property from hazards that arise due to improper maintenance or fire.

SCOPE

The unsafe placard is designed to give the fire marshal's office a means to notify the general public as well as public safety workers of unsafe conditions that constitute a fire hazard or other dangers to human life and safety.

PROCEDURE

Standard

When it is deemed necessary by the Fire Marshal or Designee to placard a structure for reasons of UNSAFE CONDITIONS, the Fire Marshal will proceed to produce an unsafe/vacant structure document.

Authority

In accordance with the prescribed procedures of the City of Portsmouth, and with the concurrence of the appointing authority, the fire marshal is the fire code official. The Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code (SFPC) requires the fire code official to order certain dangerous conditions be removed or remedied. Included within this classification are dangerous conditions, which are liable to cause or contribute to the spread of fire in or on said premises, building or structure, or to endanger the occupants thereof.

A vacant structure, or portion of a structure, unguarded or open at door or window shall be deemed a fire hazard and unsafe within the code (SFPC sections 110.1 and 110.4).

Exception

When a structure has been involved in the act of fire and the Incident Commander deems the structure unsafe, the structure is to be placarded as soon as practical. The Incident Commander shall immediately notify the Fire Marshal and or Assistant Fire Marshal as to his/her actions. As soon as practical, the Fire Marshal will verify the information and assure that the conditions of this procedure are met.

Notifications

After a placard had been placed, a report shall be forwarded to the building official's office advising of the owners name, address, date, and the findings to support the reasoning of the placard, on a weekly basis. Additionally, a written notice will be sent to

the last known owner of the premises citing the section of the Statewide Fire Prevention Code allegedly violated, describing the conditions deemed unsafe and specifying time limitation for the required abatements to be made to render the structure or premises safe and secure. The owner will also be advised of his/her right to appeal all decisions.

January 2013 Page 1 of 2

PORTSMOUTH FIRE DEPARTMENT
Standard Operating Procedure No. 403
VACANT STRUCTURES

Guidelines

- Inspection of structure.
- Documentation of Findings.
- Consultation with other officer if necessary.
- Notify the Fire Marshal and or Deputy Fire Marshal by forwarding a vacant unsafe structure form (except active fire scenes).
- Placement of placards at all entrances and or openings.
- Notification of the Building Officials Office will be done weekly by Fire Marshal.

Placard Color Codes

Green

A green placard indicates there is minimal or no structural damage or known hazards at the time of inspection.

Orange

An orange placard signifies a greater level of concern with regard to structural stability. Entry of fire department personnel should only be to rescue people within the structure.

Red

A red placard indicates ‘DO NOT ENTER’ -structural stability is compromised and conditions are too hazardous to mount any interior attack.

January 2013
Page 2 of 2

Appendix F

Personal Communication

Gary Kirkmire works for the city of Rochester's Department of Neighborhood and Business Development and serves as the Director of the Bureau of Inspection and Compliance Services. He is responsible for enforcing the building and properties codes within the city of Rochester. His bureau maintains a current citywide list of vacant structures. Director Kirkmire provided the author with the vacant building addresses for 2012 and 2013.

Director Kirkmire has been involved with the city's vacant building program from its inception. His expertise and knowledge were invaluable to the author.

Director Kirkmire’s office is located at City Hall, 30 Church Street, Rochester, New York. He can be reached at the following phone number (585) 428-6520 and the mailing address is:

Department of Neighborhood and Business Development

Bureau of Inspection and Compliance

City Hall

30 Church Street

Rochester, New York, 14614

Appendix G

Personal Communication

Bret Garwood works for the city of Rochester's Neighborhood and Business Development. He serves as the Director of Business and Housing Development. Director Garwood provided the housing demolition information that was used to create Table 3. His bureau is responsible for new housing development and prioritizes properties slated for demolition.

Director Garwood's office is located at City Hall, 30 Church Street, Rochester, New York. He can be reached at the following phone number (585) 428-6808 and the mailing address is:

Department of Neighborhood and Business Development

Office of Business and Housing Development

City Hall

30 Church Street

Rochester, New York, 14614

Appendix H

Personal Communication

John Merklinger is the Director of the Monroe County Emergency Communications Department. The 911 Center dispatches 84 different public safety agencies, including the city of Rochester. On March 4, 2013, Director Merklinger was interviewed by telephone while in his office. He was asked if he was aware of any jurisdictions that were dispatching color coded premise warnings as a part of a vacant building program.

On behalf of the author, Director Merklinger conducted an email survey of 911 directors in New York State inquiring whether their jurisdiction, or any other jurisdiction known to them, used a combination of plain language and color codes to inform first responders of the dangers associated with vacant building addresses.

Director Merklinger's office is located at City Hall, 30 Church Street, Rochester, New York. He can be reached at the following phone number (585) 528-2200 and the mailing address is:

Emergency Communications Department

321 West Main Street

Rochester, New York, 14608

Appendix I

Personal Communication

Molly Clifford is the Director of Administration for the Rochester Fire Department. She has been actively involved in city's vacant building program and previously held the position of Director of the Neighborhood Service Centers for the city of Rochester. She has provided valuable insight and direction throughout this project, and frequently collaborates with other city departments.

Director Clifford's office is located on the sixth floor the Public Safety Building, Rochester, New York. She can be reached at the following phone number (585) 428-7327 and the mailing address is:

City of Rochester Fire Department

185 Exchange Blvd. Suite 660

Rochester, New York, 14614

Appendix J

Personal Communication

Salvatore Mitrano III was appointed Fire Chief of the Rochester Fire Department on November 9, 2012. He previously held the position of Executive Deputy Chief and was responsible for oversight of the department's inspection programs. Chief Mitrano is a graduate of the National Fire Academy EFO program. He was consulted throughout the project and his expertise valued.

Chief Mitrano's office is located on the sixth floor the Public Safety Building, Rochester, New York. He can be reached at the following phone number (585) 428-7327 and the mailing address is:

City of Rochester Fire Department

185 Exchange Blvd. Suite 660

Rochester, New York, 14614

Appendix K

Personal Communication

On March 19, 2013, at 10:00 a.m. a meeting was held in the Rochester Fire Department conference room located at 185 Exchange Boulevard, Rochester, New York. The following attended the meeting:

Martin W. McMillan, Deputy Fire Chief, Rochester Fire Department

Molly Clifford, Director of Fire Administration, Rochester Fire Department

Captain Michael Dobbertin, Planning and Research, Rochester Fire Department

Firefighter Jose L. Montes, Planning and Research, Rochester Fire Department

Kurt D. Martin, Bureau of Codes and Compliance, City of Rochester

Norman Jones, Manager of Building Services, City of Rochester

Tom Graves, Building Services, City of Rochester

The intent of the meeting was to summarize the progress of the 2013 vacant building inspection and marking program. The highlights of the meeting:

- 99% of the program inspections have been completed to date by RFD line companies.
- Tom Graves and his crew have placarded 353 city owned, type red vacant properties.
- The next phase of the placarding program will include approximately 100 privately owned vacant structures.

- The city currently has enough placards to complete all type red inspections for the remainder of the year.
- Kurt Martin will confer with Director Gary Kirkmire relative to the creation of Notice and Orders to be served on private owners of property identified as type red vacant properties.
- Deputy Chief McMillan will forward copies of the vacant building inspection forms to Kurt Martin.
- Captain Dobbertin, along with Firefighter Montes, have been exploring various database options that will improve our information sharing ability. They are looking at integrating GIS mapping into the system. They are working with the city's information technology department and will report their findings in April.

Appendix L

STATE OF NEW YORK
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
ONE COMMERCE PLAZA
99 WASHINGTON AVENUE
ALBANY, NY 12231-0001

ANDREW M. CUOMO
GOVERNOR

CESAR A. PERALES
SECRETARY OF STATE

WESTERN REGION - BUFFALO BOARD OF REVIEW

In the Matter of the Petition of:
City of Rochester
For a Variance to the New York State
Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code

DECISION

PETITION NO. 2012-0188

Upon the application of City of Rochester (Petitioner) filed pursuant to 19 NYCRR 1205 on May 2, 2012, and upon taking testimony and hearing argument thereon at a duly noticed hearing before the Western Region - Buffalo Board of Review (the Board) held at the Amherst Town Hall, 5583 Main Street, Williamsville, New York, on May 17, 2012, and upon all other papers in this matter, the Board makes the following determination:

NATURE OF GRIEVANCE AND RELIEF SOUGHT

The petition pertains to all existing and future vacant buildings or structures which are determined to be unsafe and which are located in the City of Rochester, Monroe County, State of New York.

Petitioner is seeking relief from **19 NYCRR Part 1225, *The Fire Code of New York State*, Section 311.5,** which (1) requires vacant buildings that have been determined to be unsafe to have placards applied in specified locations on the structure, (2) requires such placards to be of a specific size and design and to bear a specific symbol to designate one of three hazard levels, and (3) requires such placards to bear the date of application to the building and the date of the most recent inspection. Petitioner proposes to rely on the information provided by the nine-one-one computer aided dispatch system in lieu of complying with Section 311.5 of the *Fire Code of New York State*.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. A purpose of Section 311.5 of the *Fire Code of New York State* is to alert responding fire fighters to the level of hazard in a vacant building that has been determined to be unsafe. See the *2006*

International Fire Code Commentary on Section 311.5 5, which includes the following: "In order to improve fire-fighter safety when responding to incidents in buildings that have been declared to be unsafe, this section establishes an information placarding system that will assist incident commanders in making personnel and equipment deployment decisions at such incidents."

2. However, fire fighters are not the only persons who will benefit from the placarding system contemplated by Section 311.5. The placards may also alert other persons, including law enforcement personnel, emergency medical responders, and owners and their tenants and their agents, to the level of hazardous conditions in a building.

3. Petitioner operates the nine-one-one Center for all of Monroe County under a contract with the County (Transcript [Tr] at 26). Based on the testimony provided by representatives of the City of Rochester, including John Merklinger, director of the nine-one-one Center for Rochester:

- each fire station and each E.M.S. station in the County is currently equipped with a data terminal that is connected to the nine-one-one computer aided dispatch system;
- the nine-one-one computer aided dispatch system includes "premises warnings," and when a call is dispatched by the nine-one-one computer aided dispatch system, the "premises warnings" are displayed on the data terminal in each fire station and each E M S station in the County;
- the "premises warnings" include a color code (green, yellow, or red) that indicates the level of hazard in the structure;
- currently, the dispatcher reads the "premises warnings" over the radio to vehicles en route to an incident;
- in addition, certain vehicles (e.g., City of Rochester police cars) have mobile data terminals that can visually display the "premises warnings;"
- as of the date of the hearing, City of Rochester fire trucks are not equipped with mobile data terminals; and
- the City has plans to equip its fire trucks with mobile data terminals over the next two months.

4. The premises warning procedures in the nine-one-one system are not intended or designed to provide notification to persons who do not have access to the system, including but not limited to building owners, tenants, and their authorized agents.

5. The Uniform Code permits owners, tenants and their authorized agents to enter into unsafe buildings to assess conditions and to conduct repairs.

6. The "premises warning" information provided to those who do have access to the nine-one-one computer aided dispatch system is address-sensitive. If a person calling a fire or other incident into the fire department does not know the address of the involved building – or inadvertently gives the wrong address – those persons having access to the nine-one-one computer aided dispatch system may receive no "premises warning" information or, worse, incorrect "premises warning" information.

7. As a threshold issue in all variance applications, the Petitioner must show that granting the variance will not "substantially adversely affect [the Uniform Code's] provisions for health, safety, and security" (Executive Law § 381(1)(f), 19 NYCRR § 1205.4(a)). No Board of Review can grant a variance if doing so would have such a substantial adverse affect.

8. In this case, Petitioner proposes to rely on the nine-one-one computer aided dispatch system in lieu of complying with Section 311.5 of the *Fire Code of New York State*. However, the placarding system contemplated by Section 311.5 of the *Fire Code of New York State* can provide valuable information to persons who do not have access to the nine-one-one computer aided dispatch system. The Section 311.5 placarding system will provide building-specific information even to those who do have access to the nine-one-one computer aided dispatch system which may prove invaluable in a situation where no address, or the incorrect address, is provided to the nine-one-one dispatcher.

9. Based on the foregoing, the Board finds that granting the requested variance would substantially adversely affect the Uniform Code's provisions for health, safety, and security.

10. Petitioner's failure to carry its burden of proof [1] on the threshold issue discussed in the preceding three paragraphs requires denial of the application, and makes it unnecessary to consider

---

[1] "Whether or not a hearing is held and regardless of the form of the evidence and the manner of its presentation, the burden of proof shall be on the petitioner to show that he is entitled to any relief . . . ." (19 NYCRR § 1205.5(f)).

Petitioner's remaining assertions. However, the Board notes the following with regard to Petitioner's assertions regarding the costs of complying with Section 311.5:

- Petitioner asserts that Section 311.5 "places upon the City the responsibility of conducting interior inspections of all vacant properties . . . and tracking the properties for changes in status . . " See Petition, Exhibit A, page 1. Petitioner also asserts that there are approximately 3,000 vacant structures in the City, and that "(p)lacarding three sides of 3,000 vacant properties" will cost at least $300,000.00 in materials and labor, and that labor costs, legal costs, and board-up and re-board-up costs associated with the "inspection of the interior of 3,000 vacant buildings" will bring the total cost of compliance with section 311.5 to $1,000,000.00 per year. See Petition, Exhibit A, pages 1 and 2.
- Petitioner significantly overstates the obligations actually imposed by Section 311.5. For example, Section 311.5 imposes no new, independent inspection obligations. Petitioner should have a code enforcement program, and that program should have the features specified in 19 NYCRR Part 1203. The features required by Part 1203 include provisions for periodic fire and safety inspections of certain buildings. Nothing in Section 311.5 requires Petitioner to adopt an inspection program more aggressive than that required by Part 1203. In addition, Petitioner's apparent assumption that Section 311.5 requires the placarding of all 3,000 vacant properties in the City is clearly incorrect. Section 311.5 requires placarding only if a building is vacant and has been determined to be unsafe.[2]
- Because of the incorrect assumptions made by Petitioner in calculating compliance costs, the Board concludes that Petitioner has failed to carry its burden of proof on its assertions with regard to the costs of compliance with Section 311.5.[3]

---

[2] No information was presented to enable the Board to determine what percentage of vacant buildings in the City of Rochester has been determined to be unsafe.

[3] Based on Petitioner's assertion that the nine-one-one computer aided dispatch system already has green, yellow and red coding information for all or most of the vacant buildings in the City, it would appear that the City has already made the determinations necessary to chose which of the three Section 311.5 placards is appropriate for any vacant building that has been determined to be unsafe.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

In accordance with the above findings, the Board finds that the Petitioner has failed to demonstrate that granting the requested variance would not substantially adversely affect the Uniform Code's provisions for health, safety, and security and, accordingly, the Board determines that the application must be denied.

DETERMINATION

WHEREFORE IT IS DETERMINED that the application for a variance from 19 NYCRR Part 1225, *The Fire Code of New York State*, Section 311.5, be and is hereby DENIED.

Chairman John Lydon and members Robert Hintz and Louis Fontana concur.

So ordered.

Western Region - Buffalo Board of Review

By: John Lydon, Chairman

Date: August 27, 2012

EFG:efg/jb

Appendix M

Rochester Fire Department
Vacant Structure Inspection Form

Date: _____ Company:

Address:

Number of Stories: _____ Approx. Dimensions _____X_____

Is structure secure? _____ Property Owner (circle one) City or Private

Building Construction:
- _____Type I – Fire Resistive
- _____Type II – Non Combustible
- _____Type III – Ordinary
- _____Type IV – Heavy Timber
- _____Type V – Wood Frame

Utilities Disconnected (Y or N)
- _____Electric
- _____Gas
- _____Water

HAZARD CLASS ***Pick a Hazard class and check all that apply***

_____ **Vacant Structure / No Unusual Hazards (Type GREEN)**

_____ **Vacant Structure / Hazardous Conditions Present (Type YELLOW)**

_____ Interior Stairs in disrepair
_____ Minor holes in floor
_____ Truss roof or floor assembly
_____ Unusual fire load (interior)
_____ Maze like floor plan
_____ Previous fire
_____ Limited exit/egress points
_____ Open walls / studs
_____ Suspended ceilings
_____ Unusual/heavy fire load (roof)
_____ Boarded Windows/Doors

Other _____

_____ **Vacant Structure / Confirmed Do Not Enter Structure (Type RED)**

_____ Large holes in floor
_____ Extensive fire load (interior)
_____ Open shaft ways/elevators
_____ Load bearing walls missing
_____ Significant Previous fire(s)
_____ Structurally unsound roof
_____ Structurally unsound floors/walls
_____ Unstable chimneys
_____ General structural instability
_____ Hazardous Materials present

Other_____

Comments: _____

Classification changed to _____ D/C McMillan notified (e-mail)_____Date_____
Officer _____Company_____Group_____Date_____

Battalion Chief _____Group_____ Date_____

******Battalion Chief's signature required for confirmed Do Not Enter structures**

******* Hard Copy sent to LDC M. McMillan after initial inspection or classification change!***

Appendix N

Standard Operating Guidelines for the Rochester New York Fire Department

Title: Vacant / Abandoned Building Fires **Updated: 03-12**

4 Pages

Reference: **NFPA 1500 (6-2)**
NFPA Handbook Definitions Dated: 2/09
RFD SOG Vacant/Abandoned building Inspections
National Institute of Safety and Health (NIOSH)

Purpose: **The following guidelines are to insure the safety of all personnel operating at the scene of vacant/abandoned building fires. Incident Commanders shall place firefighter safety at the forefront when establishing incident action plans. A risk-benefit analysis shall be conducted through-out the incident with emphasis placed on the following risk assessment strategy, "little gained-little risked".**

Scope: **This guideline applies to all firefighting personnel operating at the scene of vacant/abandoned building fires that have been inspected and classified by RFD personnel as (1) Vacant/Hazardous Conditions Present (type YELLOW) or (2) Vacant/ Confirmed DO NOT ENTER (type RED).**

Guidelines:

Fires that occur in buildings that have been inspected by RFD personnel and classified as **Vacant/No Unusual Hazard(s) (Type GREEN) may be fought using standard structure fire guidelines and practices.** Firefighters should *always exercise caution* when entering these structures to extinguish fires, as conditions may have change since the last inspection.

Definitions:

Vacant: A vacant structure is not being occupied or used for any purpose. The structure may appear to be maintained and may be secured to prevent unauthorized entry.

Abandoned: A structure that is not occupied, is not maintained, and is not used for any purpose. The structure may be unsecured and in a state of obvious disrepair or neglect.

**** For this SOG, the definition of a vacant and abandoned buildings shall remain synonymous.*

Operational Procedures for Vacant Structures Classified as Vacant/Hazardous Conditions Present (Type YELLOW)

No entry will be made until all exposure problems and the following operational tasks have been addressed:

- First in arriving officer will establish command according to current SOG's. They will complete a 360 size-up of the structure and communicate all pertinent information to dispatch and arriving units, and address any ***imminent*** life safety issue.
- Accountability board shall be in place and overseen by the Safety Officer or the "designated safety officer".
- Designated base pumper has secured and charged the primary water supply to the pump. Secondary water supply is in process of being secured.
- The IC must have sufficient manpower on hand to remove boards from doors and windows before any entry is made. Access and egress points to the structure must be clear and unobstructed. Roof operations will not be done unless ordered by the IC. If a roof operation is so ordered, a company officer will be part of the roof team. Structures must be properly laddered for emergency egress points.
- A charged attack line at point of entry with a charged back-up line in place. The Back-up line is to protect the first attack line!
- RIC has been designated and on scene.

A building that has been inspected by RFD personnel and classified as **Vacant/Hazardous Conditions Present (Type YELLOW)** indicates that *at the time of the inspection*, one or more of the following structural hazards were present:

- Interior stairs in disrepair
- Minor holes in floor
- Unusual fire load (interior)
- Truss roof or floor assembly
- Unusual/ heavy load on the roof
- Maze like floor plan
- Dropped wires / suspended ceilings
- Open studs/walls
- Limited exit/egress points
- Boarded windows and doors
- Previous fire(s)
- Other hazards as deemed by officer (identify)

*** Firefighters should exercise caution when entering these structures during firefighting as conditions may have changed since the last inspection and additional hazards may be present.

*******All vacant structures that have been boarded shall at a minimum be classified with this designation due to limited exit/egress points.***

Operational Procedures for Vacant Structures Classified as Vacant/Confirmed Do Not Enter (Type RED)

- **Defensive operations should be considered for <u>advanced</u> fires.**
- **Interior operations in these buildings should only occur after the incident commander has conducted an in-depth size-up and life safety issues are present.**
- **Entry (with extreme caution) may be made for *<u>incipient</u>* <u>incidents only</u>. A formal command must be established with specific tasks and objectives given to crews entering the structure. Crew size and entry time shall be limited and closely monitored. The use of hose lines/taglines and thermal imaging cameras are mandatory.**
- Accountability board shall be in place and overseen by the Safety Officer or the "designated safety officer".
- Designated base pumper has secured and charged the primary water supply to the pump. Secondary water supply is in process of being secured.
- The IC must have sufficient manpower on hand to remover boards from doors and windows before any entry is made. Access and egress points to the structure must be clear and unobstructed. Roof operations will not be done unless ordered by the IC. If a roof operation is so ordered, a company officer will be part of the roof team. Structures must be properly laddered for emergency egress points.
- A charged attack line at point of entry with a charged back-up line in place. The Back-up line is to protect the first attack line!
- RIC has been designated and on scene.

A building that has been inspected by RFD personnel and classified as **Vacant/Confirmed Do Not Enter (Type RED)** indicates that *<u>at the time of the inspection</u>*, one or more of the following structural hazards were present:
:

- Large floor spaces missing
- Open shaft ways/elevators
- Structurally unsound roofs
- Load bearing walls missing
- Structurally unsound floors/walls
- Unstable chimneys
- General structural instability
- Extensive fire load(interior)
- Hazardous material present
- Multiple/significant fire(s)
- Other hazards as deemed by officer (identify

Incident Commanders, who choose to have fire companies enter vacant structures that have been classified as **Vacant/Confirmed Do Not Enter (Type RED),** *<u>shall document/validate their reason(s) in the comment section of the fire incident report.</u>*

Note: these classifications are only a guide to the hazards that may be encountered in a building. **Hazards may change throughout time.** A detailed size-up always needs to be completed for all vacant buildings to determine appropriate fire ground strategies and tactics.

Incident Priorities

- **Life Safety (firefighter) HIGHEST PRIORTY!**
- **Exposures**
- **Confinement**
- **Extinguishment**

Appendix O

ROCHESTER FIRE DEPARTMENT
TRAINING BULLETIN

Course #: 12-T-369-2-H **Date issued: 01-17-2012**

Vacant Building Awareness, Firefighting Strategies & Tactics, and Inspection Procedures

Course Description: The course will provide a general overview of the vacant building problem with in the City of Rochester. A review of the national trends regarding firefighter safety issues while operating at vacant building fires will be presented, including recommendations from NIOSH, The United States Fire Administration, and subject matter experts. New and revised Standard Operating Guidelines will be presented and reviewed. The procedures for inspecting vacant buildings will be summarized; including the use of RFD Form 10010 (new) and recording protocols. Classroom discussion is encouraged and Command Staff are invited to participate in each session.

Date & Times: To be scheduled by the Group Deputy Chief, beginning in January, 2012

Location: Headquarters' Classroom / Hudson Ave. Classroom

Companies: All Line Division Companies and Chief Officers

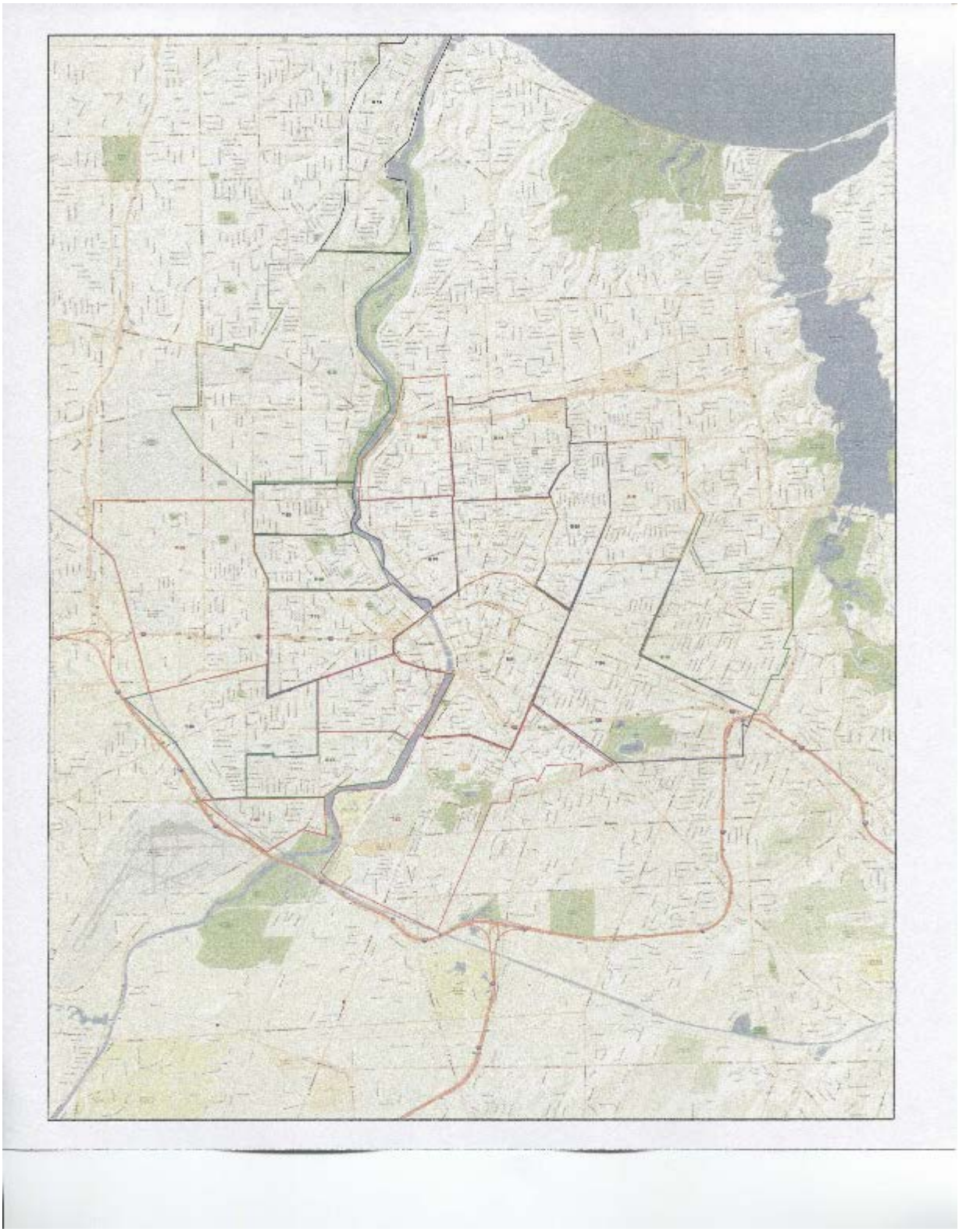
Equipment: N/A

Contact: Martin McMillan, Deputy Fire Chief
LDC Office, Group 3
428-5970

Martin W. McMillan, Deputy Fire Chief

Distribution: All Stations and Divisions

Appendix P




E 02
E 16
E 09
St Paul St
Nye Park
Hollenbeck St
N Clinton Ave
Clinton Ave
Excel Dr
Remington St
Seneca Ave
Joseph Ave
Bremen St
Townsend St
Moulson St
Klein St
Hoff St
Bauman St
St Casimir St
Wakefield St
Roser St
Hudson Ave
Kilmar St
North St
Baird St
Carter St
Florack St
Northaven Ter
Cynthia Ln
Branch St
Thomas St
Maria St
Barons St
Petrossi Dr
Aurora St
Portage St
Clairmount St
Ferncliffe Dr
Nicholls St
Jerold St
Newcomb St
Rustic St
Arbutus St
Coleman Ter
Manitou St
Ziegler St
Midland Ave
Norran Dr
Hillcrest St
Goodman St
N Goodman St
Leicestershire Rd
N Park Dr
Taft Ave
Clark Ave
Knapp Ave
Bricker St
241
112
104
114
108
E Ridge Rd

Appendix Q

	Group	No.	Direction	Address	Designation	Inspection Date	RFD Color	RFD 10010	Placard	Officer
E1	1	471		ALEXANDER	ST	01/11/13	GREEN		N	Capt Laboski
E1	1	473		ALEXANDER	ST	01/11/13	GREEN	x	N	Capt Laboski
E1	1	477		ALEXANDER	ST	01/11/13	GREEN		N	Capt Laboski
E1	1	60		ATLANTIC	AV	01/11/13	RED		N	Capt Laboski
E1	1	157		AVERILL	AV	01/12/13	YELLOW		N	Capt Laboski
E1	1	449		AVERILL	AV	01/12/13	GREEN	x	N	Capt Laboski
E1	1	705		AVERILL	AV	01/12/13	YELLOW	x	N	Capt Laboski
E1	1	45		BIRCH	CRES	01/11/13	GREEN		N	Capt Laboski
E1	1	29		BOARDMAN	ST					
E1	1	773		BROAD	ST	01/12/13	GREEN	x	N	Capt Laboski
E1	1	883		BROAD	ST	01/12/13	GREEN	x	N	Capt Laboski
E1	1	71		CANTERBURY	RD					
E1	1	65		CHESTNUT	ST	01/13/13	YELLOW		N	Capt Laboski
E1	1	9	N	CLINTON	AV	01/13/13	YELLOW		N	
E1	1	1		DENNING	ST					
E1	1	800		EAST	AV	01/11/13	GREEN	x	N	Capt Laboski
E1	1	20		GARDINER	PK		GREEN			
E1	1	208	N	GOODMAN	ST					
E1	1	325	S	GOODMAN	ST		GREEN			
E1	1	466	S	GOODMAN	ST					
E1	1	223		GREGORY	ST					
E1	1	225		GREGORY	ST					
E1	1	425		GREGORY	ST		YELLOW			
E1	2	6		GRIFFITH	ST	01/15/13		X	N	RUSSELL
E1	2	293		HAMILTON	ST	01/30/13	GREEN			RUSSELL
E1	2	9		LAWRENCE	ST	01/15/13		X	N	RUSSELL
E1	2	138		LEWIS	ST	01/15/13	GREEN		N	RUSSELL
E1	2	1		LINWOOD	PL	01/15/13	YELLOW	X	N	RUSSELL
E1	2	52		LYNDHURST	ST	01/15/13	YELLOW	X	N	RUSSELL
E1	2	198		LYNDHURST	ST	01/15/13	YELLOW	X	N	RUSSELL
E1	2	220		LYNDHURST	ST	01/15/13	GREEN		N	RUSSELL

Appendix R

Standard Operating Guidelines for the Rochester New York Fire Department

Title: Vacant /Abandoned Building Inspection Program **Updated: 03-12**
6 Pages

Reference: City of Rochester Property Code 90-17
RFD SOG Vacant/Abandoned Building Fires
National Institute of Safety and Health (NIOSH)

Purpose: To identify the inherent hazards in vacant/abandoned buildings located in the City of Rochester. To categorize these structures with a standardized building classification system that identifies the hazards and risks associated with the building. Company Officers and Incident Commanders shall utilize this information while conducting fire ground size-ups and formulating action plans.

Scope: This classification system shall be used on vacant and abandoned buildings within the City of Rochester. The system applies to private and city owned properties.

Guidelines:

Definitions: **Vacant:** A vacant structure is not being occupied or used for any purpose. The structure may appear to be maintained and may be secured to prevent unauthorized entry.

Abandoned: A structure that is not occupied, is not maintained, and is not used for any purpose. The structure may be unsecured and in a state of obvious disrepair or neglect.

*** *For this SOG, the definition of a vacant an abandoned buildings shall remain synonymous.*

The City of Rochester Fire Department will inspect all vacant structures through-out the calendar year. Company Captains will be issued a list of vacant properties that shall be inspected semi-annually. Inspections maybe issued in either a hard copy or placed in the company's Red Alert NMX inspection queue.

Vacant properties that are privately owned may not be entered without an owner's permission. Privately owned dwellings shall be inspected from the exterior of the structure when an owner's permission cannot be obtained. City owned structures maybe entered and inspected at the discretion of the Company officer. Vacant building ownership information can be found on the G:Drive >GDrive>FDForms>AdminLists>Vacant Program Spreadsheet.

Company officers who encounter unsecured vacant structures shall notify the Fire Safety Lieutenant via an e-mail and forward a copy to their assigned Battalion Chief.

The Rochester Fire Department is not responsible for boarding vacant structures; however an officer may temporarily re-secure an open door or secure a boarded window if the situation poses a public safety threat. It is recommended that company officers create an incident number for these incidents and ensure that the structure is not occupied prior to re-securing.

The primary purpose for inspecting vacant buildings is to determine the appropriate hazard classification for the premise warning that will be attached to the address. The RFD is inspecting vacant structures to enhance the safety of our members.

Building Classifications for the City of Rochester's Vacant Structures

After conducting a vacant building inspection, Company officers shall classify a vacant structure using one of the following three classifications:

1. **VACANT - NO UNUSUAL HAZARDS (Type GREEN)**
2. **VACANT - HAZARDOUS CONDITIONS PRESENT (Type YELLOW)**
3. **VACANT - CONFIRMED DO NOT ENTER (Type RED)**

DEFINITIONS

(1) VACANT - NO UNUSUAL HAZARDS (Type GREEN)

A building that has been inspected by RFD personnel and classified as **Vacant - No Unusual Hazard(s) (Type GREEN)** indicates that *at the time of the inspection*, the building posed no unusual structural hazard(s). Firefighters should exercise caution when entering these structures as conditions may have change since the last inspection.

A premise warning will be attached to the address stating that the property is vacant and no unusual hazards are present (Type GREEN).

Appropriate firefighting operations for vacant structures may take place upon proper size-up. Follow RFD SOG "Vacant/Abandoned Building Fires".

(2) VACANT - HAZARDOUS CONDITIONS PRESENT (Type YELLOW)

A building that has been inspected by RFD personnel and classified as **Vacant - Hazardous Conditions Present (Type Yellow)** indicates that *at the time of the inspection*, one or more of the following structural hazards were present:

- Interior stairs in disrepair
- Minor holes in floor
- Unusual fire load (interior)
- Truss roof or floor assembly
- Unusual/ heavy load on the roof
- Maze like floor plan
- Dropped wires / suspended ceilings
- Open studs/walls
- Limited exit/egress points
- Boarded windows and doors
- Previous fire(s)
- Other hazards as deemed by officer (identify)

Firefighters should exercise caution when entering these structures as conditions may have changed since the last inspection and additional hazards maybe present.

*******All vacant structures that have been boarded shall at a minimum be classified with this designation due to limited exit/egress points.***

A premise warning shall be attached to this address stating that the address is vacant, and hazardous condition(s) are present (Type YELLOW).

Firefighting operations may begin only after a careful size up by a company officer. A formal command will be established by an on-scene officer. Limited personnel are to be committed to the structure. Follow RFD SOG "Vacant/Abandoned Building Fires".

(3) VACANT - CONFIRMED DO NOT ENTER (Type RED)

A building that has been inspected by RFD personnel and classified as **Vacant - Confirmed Do Not Enter (Type Red)** indicates that *at the time of the inspection*, one or more of the following structural hazards were present:

- Large floor spaces missing
- Open shaft ways/elevators
- Structurally unsound roofs
- Load bearing walls missing
- Structurally unsound floors/walls
- Unstable chimneys
- General structural instability
- Extensive fire load(interior)
- Hazardous material present
- Multiple/significant fire(s)
- Other hazards as deemed by officer (identify)

*******This hazard classification shall be confirmed by a Battalion Chief or higher ranking Chief Officer. A signature line has been placed at the bottom of the inspection form (RFD10010).***

A premise warning shall be attached to the address stating that the building is a vacant structure and has a confirmed/ do not enter classification (Type RED).

Defensive operations should be considered for advanced fires. Interior operations in these buildings should only occur after the incident commander has conducted an in-depth size-up and life safety issues are present. Entry (with extreme caution) may be made for *incipient* incidents only. A formal command must be established with specific tasks and objectives given to crews entering the structure. Crew size and entry time shall be limited and closely monitored. The use of hose lines/taglines and thermal imaging cameras are mandatory. Follow RFD SOG Vacant/Abandoned Building Fires.

Incident Commanders who choose to have fire companies enter vacant structures that have been classified as **Vacant/Confirmed Do Not Enter (Type RED)** *shall document/validate their reason(s) in the comment section of the fire incident report.*

Note: these classifications are only a guide to the hazards that may be encountered in a building. **Hazards may change throughout time.** A detailed size-up always needs to be completed for all vacant buildings to determine appropriate fire ground strategies and tactics.

Inspection Process

The Rochester Fire Department will inspect/classify all vacant buildings within the City of Rochester during the calendar year. At the present time, each structure will be inspected a minimum of twice a year.

The City's *Bureau of Inspections and Compliance Services* will provide the Planning & Research Division with updated vacant building lists through-out the calendar year, including properties that are scheduled for demolition.

Vacant property inspections will be located in each company's Red Alert NMX inspection queue. RFD form 10010 entitled "Vacant Structure Inspection Form" shall be completed for each property when the property is inspected for the first time or when **a company officer encounters a previously inspected vacant property and the condition of the property has changed to the point that re-classification is necessary. The officer shall send an e-mail to the Group 3 Deputy Chief noting the new classification. This notification shall be made when the company returns to quarters.**

All completed RFD 10010 forms (hard copies) shall be sent to the Group 3 Deputy Chief via departmental mail in a legible format. Company officer signatures shall be recognizable. An updated premise warning will be sent to ECD (911 center) and attached to the address. Planning and Research will update the queues as properties are added and will be responsible for sending a list of premise warnings to ECD at regular intervals. Company Captains will be provided a citywide list of vacant properties and owner information (private vs. city owned).
Vacant buildings that have been identified for training shall be classified as **Vacant - Confirmed Do Not Enter Structures (Type RED)** for firefighting purposes**.** These structures are generally slated for demolition, however not all of these properties are structurally unsound and may have another classification. Company officers who train on vacant structures are responsible for ensuring that the proper classification has been placed on the building. This includes academy staff engaged in recruit training. Whenever possible, premise warnings should be attached these buildings prior to training on them.

Appendix S

Rochester Fire Department

Vacant Building

Inspection Program

Instruction Manual

Table of Contents

Rochester Fire Department

Vacant Building Inspection Manual

Introduction

The City of Rochester Fire Department instituted a vacant building inspection program in 2011-12. The primary function of the program was to evaluate the structural integrity of all the vacant structures with in the city of Rochester and identify buildings that posed a danger to interior structural firefighting operations. The completed inspection information was conveyed to the *Emergency Communications Department (ECD)* and premise warnings were generated for every vacant property inspection.

The Bureau of Inspection and Compliance Services is responsible for maintaining a citywide list of vacant buildings and routinely inspects and monitors these properties. They provided the Fire Department with a list of 2525 addresses in December of 2011. The addresses were placed in the RedNMX™ Vacant Building Inspection program and companies inspected all of the properties during the first six months of the 2012.

The number of vacant building inspections has decreased for 2013. The *Bureau of Inspection and Compliance Services* has provided RFD with a list of 2116 addresses that are privately owned and will be inspected in 2013. A second list containing 353 city owned properties has been included in the program for **reference** only. These properties have been scheduled for demolition and are identified in a separate (City) tab on the Excel spreadsheet. <u>All City owned properties that are scheduled for demolition have been given a Type Red Vacant Building designation and premise warning.</u> These properties **will not** be inspected by the fire department. The city began placarding these addresses on December 12, 2012.

City owned properties that are on the demolition list **should not** be used for training purposes unless they appear on the demo training list provided by the training academy staff. Buildings that have been designated for fire department training are usually scheduled for demolition in the

immediate future and have been asbestos abated. It is ***IMPERATIVE*** that company officers only train on properties that have been cleared by the Training Academy staff.

The Rochester Fire Department will continue to inspect vacant structures during the 2013 calendar year. Several significant modifications have been implemented for 2013, they include:

1. The RedNMX™ Vacant Building inspection program has been replaced with a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Vacant Building inspections can be located on the city's G-drive network in a folder labeled "Vacant Program".
2. A copy of the vacant building inspection instructions has been placed in the G-drive vacant program folder; referenced as "Vacant Building Instruction Manual".
3. The Microsoft Excel program will allow the RFD to share the information with other city agencies in a uniform format. Maintaining an accurate vacant building list with appropriate premise warnings is the primary goal of this program. The list will be updated on a weekly basis.
4. The initial phase of the inspection program will be conducted and completed during the first quarter of the year. The start date shall be January 1, 2013 and the completion date shall be March 31, 2013.
5. Additional vacant properties maybe added to a company's inspection program as new addresses are identified. The Planning and Research Division will notify the Company Captain via e-mail prior to assigning any new property to the company. These new inspection(s) may be distributed through-out the calendar year and should be completed within 30 days upon notification of the Company Captain.

General Instructions

1. Vacant building inspections were re-assigned this year in an attempt to evenly distribute these inspections through-out the city. Traditional inspection districts were not always followed; most companies have been assigned between 125-150 inspections.

2. Vacant Building Inspections can be conducted at the officer's discretion. The Line Deputy Chiefs may have companies inspect on specific dates (ex. Saturday mornings between 10:00-12:00 hrs.). A set schedule for inspections has not been created.

3. The RFD 10010 Vacant Building Inspection Form shall be completed for each address. This form is used to create the premise warning and placarding request for the property. The form is ***ONLY*** required for the ***initial*** inspection or when the ***classification*** of the address has changed. The form DOES NOT need to be completed for properties that have been previously inspected and when the classification has remained the same.

4. All completed RFD 10010 forms (hard copies) shall be placed in an intra-departmental envelope and sent to Deputy Chief Martin McMillan. All forms must be legible; including the signatures of the Officers and Battalion Chiefs completing these forms (***illegible forms will be returned***!).

5. Vacant properties that are privately owned may not be entered without an owner's permission. Privately owned dwellings shall be inspected from the exterior of the structure when an owner's permission cannot be obtained. City owned structures maybe entered and inspected at the discretion of the Company Officer. If a Company Officer cannot determine the ownership of a vacant property; the property should be inspected as privately owned.

6. Company Officers who encounter unsecured vacant structures shall notify Mr. Gary M. Kirkmire at the Bureau of Inspection and Compliance Services via an e-mail. Director Kirkmire's e-mail address is: Kirkmirg@CityofRochester.gov

7. The Rochester Fire Department is not responsible for boarding vacant structures; however an officer may temporarily re-secure an open door or secure a boarded window if the situation poses a public safety threat. It is recommended that Company Officers create an incident number for these incidents and ensure that the structure is not occupied prior to re-securing.

8. The primary purpose for inspecting vacant buildings is to determine the appropriate hazard classification for the premise warning and placarding that will be attached to the address. The RFD is inspecting vacant structures to enhance the safety of our members.

9. All city owed vacant properties that are slated for demolition have been pre-classified as VACANT/CONFIRMED DO NOT ENTER (TYPE RED) structures prior to the start of this program. These addresses will not be inspected by RFD and premises warnings have been placed on these properties. A complete list of these properties can be found on the Excel Inspection spreadsheet in a separate tab labeled "City". The list has been provided for reference only. Company Officers should consult the list when they encounter a vacant property that is not assigned to a company for inspection. If the property address is not listed on either list, the officer shall complete RFD Form 10010 and indicate that the property is a NEW vacant inspection in the comment section.

10. After conducting a vacant building inspection, Company Officers shall classify each vacant property in one of the following three classifications: 1. Vacant/No Unusual Hazards (Type Green), 2. Vacant/Hazardous Conditions Present (Type Yellow), or 3. Vacant/Confirmed Do Not Enter (Type Red). A detailed description of each classification follows.

11. Battalion Chiefs will be issued a small number of (Type Red) placards. These placards shall be placed on the front of a structure before companies leave fire scenes or other emergencies were conditions warrant there use. Incident commanders shall contact the ECD supervisor prior to leaving the scene and request that a (Type Red) premise warning be immediately placed on the property. RFD Form 10010 shall be completed by the Battalion Chief assigned to the incident and forwarded to LDC M. McMillan.

Building Classifications for the City of Rochester's Vacant Structures

The primary goal of this inspection program is to identify the inherent hazards in vacant/abandoned buildings located within the City of Rochester. To categorize these structures with a standardized building classification system that identifies the hazards and risks associated with the building. Company Officers and Incident Commanders shall utilize this information while conducting fire ground size-ups and formulating action plans.

After conducting a vacant building inspection, Company officers shall classify a vacant structure using one of the following three classifications:

4. **Vacant / No Unusual Hazard(s) (Type Green)**
5. **Vacant / Hazardous Conditions Present (Type Yellow)**
6. **Vacant/ Confirmed Do Not Enter (Type Red)**

Definitions:

Vacant/No Unusual Hazards (Type Green)

A building that has been inspected by RFD personnel and classified as **Vacant / No Unusual Hazard(s) (Type GREEN)** indicates that *at the time of the inspection*, the building posed no unusual structural hazard(s).

Vacant/Hazardous Conditions Present (Type Yellow)

A building that has been inspected by RFD personnel and classified as **Vacant / Hazardous Conditions Present (Type Yellow)** indicates that *at the time of the inspection*, one or more of the following structural hazards were present:

- Interior stairs in disrepair
- Minor holes in floor
- Unusual fire load (interior

- Truss roof or floor assembly
- Unusual/ heavy load on the roof
- Maze like floor plan
- Dropped wires / suspended ceilings
- Open studs/walls
- Limited exit/egress points
- Boarded windows and doors
- Previous fire(s)
- Other hazards as deemed by officer (identify)

All vacant structures that have been boarded shall at a minimum be classified with this designation due to limited exit/egress points.

Vacant/Confirmed Do Not Enter (Type Red)

A building that has been inspected by RFD personnel and classified as **Vacant / Confirmed Do Not Enter (Type Red)** indicates that *at the time of the inspection*, one or more of the following structural hazards were present:
:

- Large floor spaces missing
- Open shaft ways/elevators
- Structurally unsound roofs
- Load bearing walls missing
- Structurally unsound floors/walls
- Unstable chimneys
- General structural instability
- Extensive fire load(interior)
- Hazardous material present
- Multiple/significant fire(s)
- Other hazards as deemed by officer (identify)

********This hazard classification shall be confirmed by a Battalion Chief or higher ranking Chief Officer. A signature line has been placed at the bottom of the inspection form (RFD10010).***

Fire Company Inspection Spreadsheet Instructions
Microsoft Excel Program

The 2013 Vacant Building Inspection program will use a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet to document and manage the program. The decision to replace the 2012 RedNMX™ program with Excel was based on the need to have a common format that allowed the Planning and Research Division to share this information with other city agencies. The format is simple to use and is very user-friendly.

A separate tab labeled ***"private***" has been created for all privately owned fire company inspections. A city wide demolition list has also been included in this program for reference only. All ***"city"*** owned properties that are scheduled for demolition are contained in this list. Fire companies will not be assigned these addresses for inspections. All of these addresses have been classified as Vacant/Confirmed Do Not Enter (Type Red) properties. Premise warnings were placed these properties prior to the start of the 2013 inspection program and NBD employees have initiated the placarding process.

These properties **ARE NOT TO USED FOR TRAINING** unless a specific address has been cleared by the Training Academy staff and listed on the ***Training Demo List***. Many of these properties are not slated for immediate demolition and have NOT been asbestos surveyed or abated. Questions regarding vacant properties that have been cleared for training purposes should be directed to Captain Shaw at the PSTF.

Spreadsheet Directions:

A. Company: Indicates the Company that has been assigned the inspection. This function is reserved for the Planning and Research Division and the column is locked-out.

B. Group: Company Captains may use this column to assign inspections to specific Group Officers.

C. Address: Property numerical. This function is reserved for the Planning and Research Division and the column has been locked.

D. Address: Street Direction. This function is reserved for the Planning and Research Division and the column has been locked.

E. Address: Street Name. This function is reserved for the Planning and Research Division and the column has been locked.

F. Address: Street Type: This function has been reserved for the Planning and Research Division and the column has been locked.

G. Date: Place the date the property was inspected in the column. Planning and Research has formatted the date in the following manner: month/day/year (xx/xx/xx).

H. Vacant Type: Indicate the vacant type by color code: Green, Yellow or Red. Use all CAPITIAL Letters. Properties that have been previously inspected will have a color code indicated in the box; new inspections are blank. Do not place anything but color code information in this column. If the property needs another designation (ie. property is occupied) use RFD form 10010.

I. RFD 10010 Place an (X) in the box if a RFD form 10010 was completed for this address and sent to LDC McMillan. The form is required for all new inspections, classification changes, address corrections etc. The color codes from the 2012 vacant inspection program have been transferred to this spreadsheet. Send a hard copy of this form to LDC M. McMillan via intra departmental mail. Do not hold on to these forms; updated information will be conveyed to ECD and other city agencies weekly. It is highly recommended that completed forms be placed in an envelope prior to sending them through the intradepartmental mail system.

J. Placarded: If the property has been placarded, place a (Y) in the box for Yes and a (N) in the box for No.

K. Officer: Place the name of the Officer completing the inspection in the box.

L. **Any additional columns beyond (K) are reserved for Planning and Research only.**

IMPORTANT: **Please use the "*__SAVE'__*** not (**save as**) **function after completing your work on the G Drive. DO NOT ATTEMPT TO SAVE YOUR WORK TO YOUR INDIVIUAL COMPUTER.**

***** Do not correct address information on this spreadsheet (columns are locked). The RFD 10010 form should always be utilized when conveying information that needs to be changed. Properties that are occupied, have been demolished, or need to have their classification changed are examples of when to use RFD 10010.**

****

Bureau of Inspection and Compliance Services

General Information

Vacant Property Management

Vacant structures can have a negative impact on the quality of life for the surrounding neighborhood. Blighted vacant structures and those which are unsecure and have poorly maintained yards can have a compounding effect on our resident's ability to sustain or enhance their neighborhood. As such, the City of Rochester has an aggressive policy of monitoring vacant structures as per §90-17 of the City Code.

City Owned Vacant Structures

City owned vacant structures are separated into two categories, those to be demolished and those to be sold. Once the city takes possession of a structure, it is placed on a list with the Department of Environmental Services to have the grass cut on a regular basis and any trash and debris is scheduled for removal. Those structures destined for demolition have the water, gas and electric meters removed, if necessary, and an enhanced board-up is performed to prevent any break-ins. These structures are then monitored by the demolition unit until such time they are taken down.

Privately Owned Vacant Structures

The Bureau of Inspections and Compliance Services monitors all privately owned vacant structures, visiting the locations on a regular basis but in no case less than every three weeks. During the course of conducting these inspections, city inspection staff ensures that the structure is secure and the grounds are being properly maintained and, when necessary, the following courses of action are taken:

- When the grass is more than 10 inches, the violation is cited on a Notice and Order. If it is not corrected within ten days, it is ticketed and sent to contract to be cut.

- When there is uncontained trash and debris, the violation is cited on a Notice and Order. If it is not corrected within ten days, it is ticketed and sent to contract to have the debris removed.

- When the structure is found unsecure, the inspector immediately submits a work order to have it secured.

In the situations above regarding violations of high grass and/or trash and debris, once a vacant structure has received a ticket for these violations, any subsequent issues of the same violation are immediately sent to contract to be corrected. Any time a work order is executed, the cost of correcting the violation is billed to the property owner. If the bill isn't paid, the charge is placed on the next year's property tax bill in accordance with §6-94 of the City Charter.

In addition to the enforcement efforts mentioned above, housing code tickets are issued to privately owned abandoned vacant structures which have exterior blight and have been identified as potential demolition candidates. These properties are then brought through the demolition hearing process or they are acquired through tax foreclosure and scheduled for demolition

2010 Fire Code of New York State

Section 311.5

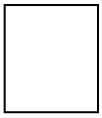
311.5 Placards Any building or structure determined to be unsafe pursuant to Section 10 of this code shall be marked as required by Sections 311.1 through 311.5.

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 the penthouse.

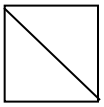
311.5.2 Placard size and color. Placards shall be 24 inches by 24 inches (610 mm by 610 mm) in size with a red background, white reflective stripes and a white reflective border. The stripes and border shall have a 2-inch (51 mm) stroke.

311.5.3 Placard date. Placards shall bear the date of their application and the date of the most recent inspection.

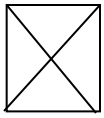
311.5.4 Placard symbols. The design of the placards shall use the following symbols:



1. This symbol shall mean that the structure had normal structural conditions at the time of marking.



2. This symbol shall mean that structural or interior hazards exist and interior firefighting 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 firefighting to exterior operations only, with entry only occurring for known life hazards.

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

Appendix T

To: ALL STATIONS, DIVISIONS AND PERSONNEL

From: Salvatore Mitrano III, Fire Chief

Date: December 13, 2012

Subject: 2013 Vacant Building Inspection Program Directive 2013-31-09

The Rochester Fire Department's 2013 Vacant Building Inspection Program will be implemented with the distribution of this directive. Fire Companies will inspect all identified vacant structures *once* a year. The vacant building inspection program will commence on January 1, 2013 and the initial list of inspections shall be completed by March 31, 2013. Company Captains are responsible for administering this program through-out the calendar year; additional properties identified after March 31, 2013 shall be inspected with-in 30 days. This directive replaces Directive 2012-10-09.

GENERAL INFORMATION

All vacant building inspections will be managed via an **Excel** spreadsheet located on the **City's "G-drive" network.** A separate folder has been created to facilitate this program. The 2012 vacant building inspection program was administered in RedNMX™ as a separate entity. The decision to change the inspection format from RedNMX™ to a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet was primarily driven by the need to share this information with other city agencies. Company Captains will have access to the vacant properties assigned to their company in December and may assign addresses to their group officers prior to the start date of this program. Company Captains are encouraged to contact Line Deputy Chief Martin McMillan concerning any questions regarding the administration of this program.

A list of vacant structures was compiled by the City's *Bureau of Inspections and Compliance Services* in November of 2012. A total of 2468 vacant properties were identified and an inspection record created for each address.

Significant Highlights:

1. **Process –** Vacant Building Inspections and relevant information can be located in a folder on the **City's "G-drive" network: see G:\ Vacant Program.**

    - ❖ Vacant Building Inspections were re-assigned this year in an attempt to evenly distribute these inspections through-out the city. Traditional inspection districts were not always followed; most companies were assigned between 125-150 inspections.

- Vacant Building Inspections can be conducted at the officer's discretion. The Line Deputy Chiefs may have companies inspect on specific dates (ex. Saturday mornings between 10:00-12:00 hrs.). A set schedule for inspections has not been created.

- The RFD 10010 Vacant Building Inspection Form shall be completed for each **NEW** address. This form is used to create the premise warning for the property. The form is ***ONLY*** required for the ***initial*** inspection or when the ***classification*** of the address has changed.

- All completed RFD 10010 forms (hard copy format) shall be placed in an intra-departmental envelope and sent to Deputy Chief Martin McMillan. All forms must be legible; including the signatures of the Officers and Battalion Chiefs completing these forms (***illegible forms will be returned***!). These forms are used to generate the vacant building premise warnings at ECD (911) and are then forwarded to the Bureau of Inspections and Compliance Services.

- Vacant properties that are privately owned may not be entered without an owner's permission. Privately owned dwellings shall be inspected from the exterior of the structure when an owner's permission cannot be obtained. City owned structures maybe entered and inspected at the discretion of the company officer. Ownership information has been provided with the inspection lists. If a company officer cannot determine the ownership of a vacant property; the property should be inspected as privately owned.

- Company Officers who encounter unsecured vacant structures shall send an email to Mr. Gary M. Kirkmire, Director of Inspections and Compliance Services; his city e-mail address is: Kirkmirg@CityofRochester.gov Please indicate the exact nature of the problem and the correct street address.

- The Rochester Fire Department is not responsible for boarding vacant structures; however an officer may temporarily re-secure an open door or secure a boarded window if the situation poses a public safety threat. It is recommended that company officers create an incident number for these incidents and ensure that the structure is not occupied prior to re-securing.

- The primary purpose for inspecting vacant buildings is to determine the appropriate hazard classification for the premise warning/placarding that will be attached to the address. The RFD is inspecting vacant structures to enhance the safety of our members.

- Battalion Chiefs shall complete RFD Form 10010 after responding to a structure fire that requires a new premise warning, premise warning change, or placarding. The Battalion Chief shall notify a ECD supervisor before leaving the scene and request an immediate premise warning change for type Yellow

and Red properties. Type Red placards will be issued to the B/C vehicles for temporary placarding (prior to leaving the fire scene). One placard shall be placed on the front of the structure.

Building Classifications for the City of Rochester's Vacant Structures

After conducting a vacant building inspection, Company officers shall classify a vacant structure using one of the following three classifications and document their findings on the Excel spreadsheet assigned to their company. RFD Form 10010 will be completed for new inspections and classification changes:

VACANT / NO UNUSUAL HAZARDS (Type GREEN)

VACANT/HAZARDOUS CONDITIONS PRESENT (Type YELLOW)

VACANT/ CONFIRMED DO NOT ENTER (Type RED)

2. Training - Vacant buildings that have been identified for training shall be classified as **Vacant/Confirmed Do Not Enter Structures (Type RED)** for firefighting purposes**.** These structures are generally slated for demolition, however not all of these properties are structurally unsound and may have another classification. Company officers who train on vacant structures are responsible for confirming that the proper classification has been placed on the building. This includes academy staff engaged in recruit training. Academy staff responsible for establishing the vacant building training list shall ensure that the proper premise warning (**Vacant/Confirmed Do Not Enter Structures (Type RED)** has been placed on all vacant property reserved for training purposes.

All **city owned** vacant properties (353 addresses) that are slated for demolition have been pre-classified as **VACANT/ CONFIRMED DO NOT ENTER (Type RED)** structures prior to the start of this inspection program. These addresses will not be inspected by RFD. Premise warnings have been placed on these addresses. A complete list of these properties can be found on the Excel Inspection spreadsheet; they have a separate tab labeled "**City**". The list has been provided for reference only. Company Officers should consult the list when they encounter a vacant property that is not assigned to a company for inspection. If the property address is not listed on either list, the officer shall complete RFD 10010 and indicate that this is a NEW inspection in the comment section.

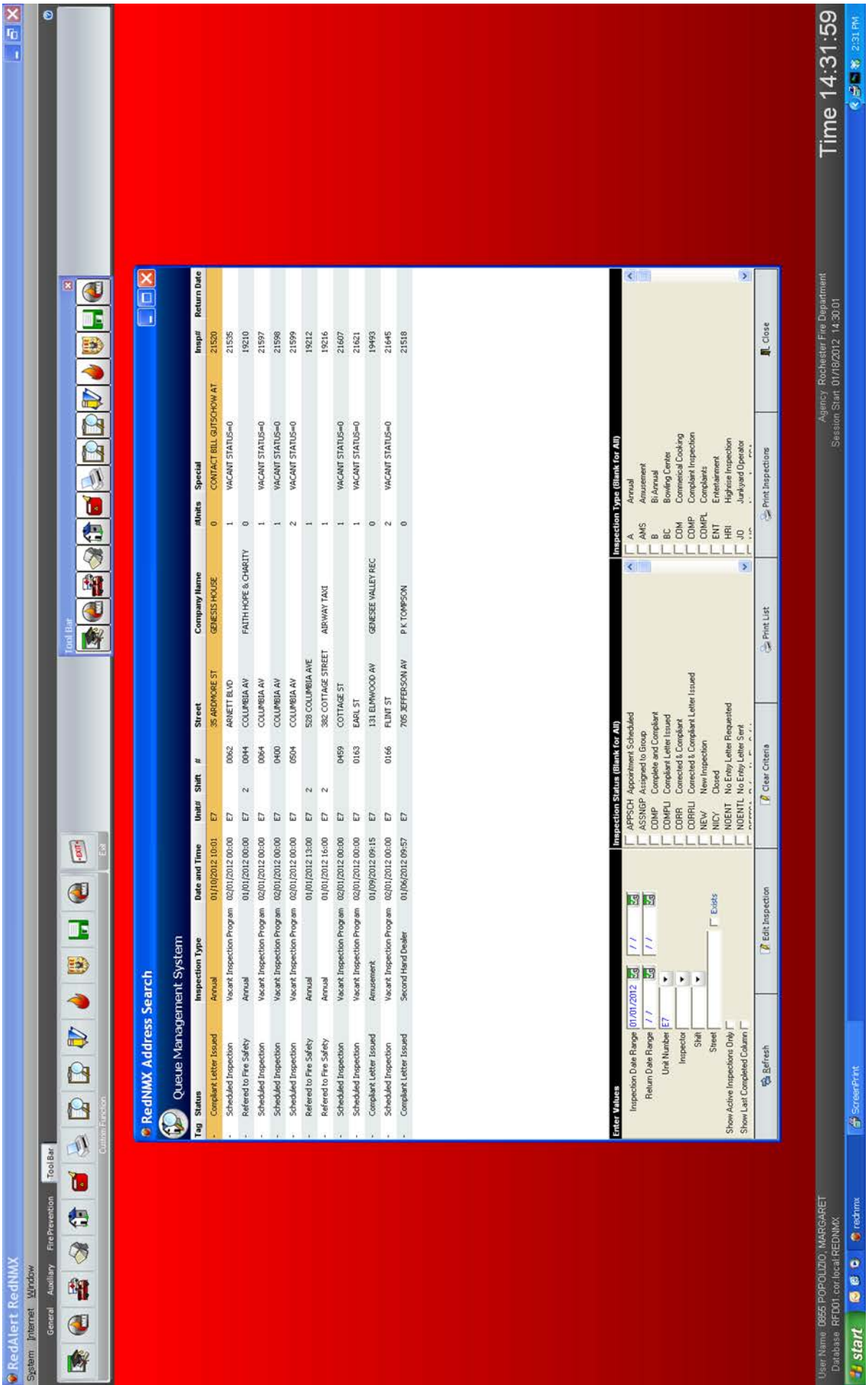
City owned properties that are on the demolition list **should not** be used for training purposes unless they appear on the demo training list provided by the training academy staff. Buildings that have been designated for fire department training are usually scheduled for demolition in the immediate future and have been asbestos abated. It is ***IMPERATIVE*** that company officers only train on properties that have been **cleared by the Training Academy staff.**

Company Officers shall review the 2013 Vacant Building Inspection Manual prior to the inception of this program. The manual can be located on the city's G-Drive network in a folder labeled ***"Vacant Program"*** and it contains all pertinent information regarding this program. A detailed explanation of the hazard classifications is included in the manual. RFD SOGs 1.27 Vacant Building Fires and 1.31 Vacant/Abandoned Building Inspection Program should be reviewed before conducting this inspection program.

ALL inspection referrals and questions regarding the inspection program are to be routed through Deputy Chief Martin McMillan. E-mails are the preferred method of communication.

Appendix U

A copy of a page from the 2012 vacant building inspection program has been included in this appendix. A total of 2525 vacant property addresses were inspected in 2012. The data was placed in the department's Red Alert inspection program. The 2012 results are displayed in Table 4. This program was replaced in 2013 with a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet.


RedAlert RedNMX
System Internet Window
General Auxiliary Fire Prevention Tool Bar
Custom Function
Exit
Tool Bar
RedNMX Address Search
Queue Management System
Tag Status Inspection Type Date and Time Unit# Shift # Street Company Name #Units Special Insp# Return Date
Compliant Letter Issued Annual 01/10/2012 10:01 E7 35 ARDMORE ST GENESIS HOUSE 0 CONTACT BILL GUTSCHOW AT 21520
Scheduled Inspection Vacant Inspection Program 02/01/2012 00:00 E7 0062 ARNETT BLVD 1 VACANT STATUS=0 21535
Refered to Fire Safety Annual 01/01/2012 00:00 E7 2 0044 COLUMBIA AV FAITH HOPE & CHARITY 0 19210
Scheduled Inspection Vacant Inspection Program 02/01/2012 00:00 E7 0064 COLUMBIA AV 1 VACANT STATUS=0 21597
Scheduled Inspection Vacant Inspection Program 02/01/2012 00:00 E7 0400 COLUMBIA AV 1 VACANT STATUS=0 21598
Scheduled Inspection Vacant Inspection Program 02/01/2012 00:00 E7 0504 COLUMBIA AV 2 VACANT STATUS=0 21599
Refered to Fire Safety Annual 01/01/2012 13:00 E7 2 528 COLUMBIA AVE 1 19212
Refered to Fire Safety Annual 01/01/2012 16:00 E7 2 382 COTTAGE STREET AIRWAY TAXI 1 19216
Scheduled Inspection Vacant Inspection Program 02/01/2012 00:00 E7 0459 COTTAGE ST 1 VACANT STATUS=0 21607
Scheduled Inspection Vacant Inspection Program 02/01/2012 00:00 E7 0163 EARL ST 1 VACANT STATUS=0 21621
Compliant Letter Issued Amusement 01/09/2012 09:15 E7 131 ELMWOOD AV GENESEE VALLEY REC 0 19493
Scheduled Inspection Vacant Inspection Program 02/01/2012 00:00 E7 0166 FLINT ST 2 VACANT STATUS=0 21645
Compliant Letter Issued Second Hand Dealer 01/06/2012 09:57 E7 705 JEFFERSON AV P K TOMPSON 0 21518
Enter Values
Inspection Date Range 01/01/2012
Return Date Range
Unit Number E7
Inspector
Shift
Street
Exists
Show Active Inspections Only
Show Last Completed Column
Inspection Status (Blank for All)
APPSCH Appointment Scheduled
ASSNGP Assigned to Group
COMP Complete and Compliant
COMPLI Compliant Letter Issued
CORR Corrected & Compliant
CORRLI Corrected & Compliant Letter Issued
NEW New Inspection
NICY Closed
NOENT No Entry Letter Requested
NOENTL No Entry Letter Sent
Inspection Type (Blank for All)
A Annual
AMS Amusement
B Bi-Annual
BC Bowling Center
COM Commerical Cooking
COMP Complaint Inspection
COMPL Complaints
ENT Entertainment
HRI Highrise Inspection
JO Junkyard Operator
Refresh
Edit Inspection
Clear Criteria
Print List
Print Inspections
Close
User Name 0855 POPOLIZIO, MARGARET
Database RFD01.cor.local:REDNMX
Agency Rochester Fire Department
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Time 14:31:59
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rednmx
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