

SECURING VACANT PREMISES

Reducing Potential Fire and Life Safety Issues

Process

In order to prevent and mitigate the fire and life safety issues associated with vacant properties, the City of Abbotsford requires that all vacant and/or abandoned properties be secured against unauthorized entry until such time as the property is demolished and/or lawfully occupied.

The property owner(s) or their agent(s) who have vacant and/or abandoned properties are responsible to:

1. Secure and maintain the condition of their property (structures and land) such that all potential fire and life safety hazards are mitigated.
2. Regularly inspect the condition of their property and take corrective measures as needed.

The hazards and risks associated with vacant premises are enforced through the City of Abbotsford's Fire Service Bylaw No. 3055-2020 as defined below:

A "**vacant premises**" means a [premises](#), except a [motor vehicle](#), that is not occupied by a lawful [occupier](#) and:

1. from which water, sewer, gas or electrical service has been intentionally disconnected, other than for temporary maintenance or repair,
2. is uninhabitable or unsuitable for other occupancy due to a [fire hazard](#), or
3. for which a demolition permit has been applied;

Requirement to secure premises

30 An [owner](#) or [occupier](#) of a [premises](#) damaged by fire **must** secure the [premises](#) against unauthorized entry in a manner acceptable to the [fire chief](#) within 2 hours after having knowledge that the fire has been extinguished.

Requirement to secure vacant premises

31 An [owner](#) or [occupier](#) of a [vacant premises](#) **must** secure the [vacant premises](#) against unauthorized entry in a manner acceptable to the [fire chief](#) within 24 hours after having knowledge that the [premises](#) is a [vacant premises](#).

Minimum Standard of Security for Vacant Buildings

All windows, doors and entry points accessible to the structure shall be secured from entry using the method described below.

1. Board-up of all windows and entrances shall be completed using the following materials:
 - 1) Plywood sheets (minimum 5/8" thickness)
 - 2) 2" x 4" (or larger) dimensional wood bracing
 - 3) 3" Robertson head wood screws
 - 4) 3" Phillips head wood screws



City of Abbotsford Fire Rescue Service

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- 5) 3" Robertson head metal screws
- 6) 3" Phillips head metal screws
- 7) 3" framing nails
2. Board-up of all windows and entrances shall be completed using the following method:
3. Plywood shall be cut to fit over the window and entry openings, flush with outside of the molding/trim studs.
4. Application of barriers shall be completed so that all lift or pry points are avoided.
5. 2" x 4" braces shall be located horizontally approximately 1/3 of the distance from the top and the bottom of each entry.
6. The Plywood and 2" x 4" braces shall be fastened to the frame of all openings by alternating between 3" Phillips head screws, 3" Robertson head crews, and 3" nails.
7. Alternating 3" Robertson head and 3" Philips head metal screws should be utilized to secure all openings with metal frames.
8. All fasteners shall be spaced not more than 6" apart.
9. Perimeter fencing, sufficient to prevent unauthorized entry on to the property shall be erected.
10. Natural gas supply to the property shall be disconnected. The building owner or representative is to notify and request the utility company to disconnect the natural gas service as soon as practicable.
11. Electrical service to the property shall be disconnected. The building owner or representative is to notify and request the utility company to disconnect the electrical service as soon as practicable.

Exception: the electrical service may remain connected in cases where the vacant premise has an actively monitored intruder or fire alarm system.

Removal of Fire Hazards

In addition to ensuring the security vacant structures and the site, the property owner must ensure that their property remains free of all fire hazards as per the City of Abbotsford's Fire Service Bylaw No. 3055-2020 Part 4- Protection of Fire Hazards.

Fire hazards

33 An owner or occupier of a premises **must** ensure that no fire hazard exists on or in the premises.

Accumulation of combustible material

34 An owner or occupier of a premises **must** not permit combustible material to accumulate in quantities or in locations on the premises that could create a fire hazard.

Accumulation of vegetation

35 An owner or occupier of real property **must** cut down and remove from the real property all vegetation that is susceptible to self-heating or self-ignition and could endanger the real property.

Cost Recovery and Fees

In the event that the property owner fails to ensure that the conditions of this document and are met, the City of Abbotsford may fulfill the conditions and recover all costs as per the City of Abbotsford's Fire Service Bylaw No. 3055-2020 Part 6- Fees and Cost Recovery.



City action at defaulter's expense

76 The *fire chief may* direct that, if a *person* subject to a requirement under this bylaw fails to take the required action, the *City may*

- (a) fulfill the requirement at the expense of the *person*, and
- (b) recover the costs incurred from that *person* as a debt.

Recovery of fees and costs as special fees

77 If the *City* does work or provides services in relation to *land* or improvements, the *City may* recover the fees and costs incurred by the *City* as special fees in accordance with *Division 14 Recovery of Special Fees of Part 7 Municipal Revenue of the Community Charter*.

For more information, please refer to the [City of Abbotsford Fire Service Bylaw No. 3055-2020](#).

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