



Coffee Break Training - Special Blend

Abandoned Buildings

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HONORING THE FALLEN

Worcester, Massachusetts
December 3, 1999



While searching a vacant cold storage warehouse during a fire, two firefighters became disoriented and called for help. During the subsequent rescue effort, four more firefighters became lost in the five-story ordinary construction building. All six died when the building became fully involved and collapsed.

Are there abandoned buildings in your jurisdiction? Honor the fallen by taking some time to inspect these dangerous conditions so we don't repeat history.

1. Visit all abandoned buildings and perform a risk assessment. Develop a pre-incident action plan in the event of a fire.
2. Communicate the risk assessment and action plan to all emergency response personnel; including whether the structure is unsafe for search and rescue operations. The risk assessment should evaluate what action may be taken should the presence of an inhabitant be confirmed on size-up.
3. Check fire protection systems for operational status, especially sprinkler and standpipe fire department connections. If they are not operational, have them repaired or at least note their status in your pre-incident action plan.
4. Assure that the building is secure from trespass and adequately boarded up. Board up procedures and techniques can be found at <http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/downloads/pdf/publications/napi4.pdf>
5. Mark the building with "Keep Out" and special warning signs, such as the Urban Search and Rescue Structure Hazards Evaluation Marking at <http://www.ksimt.org/USARMarkingSystem.pdf>
6. Verify that all utilities (electric, water, gas) have been shut off and properly secured.
7. Verify that all combustibles, flammables, and hazardous materials have been removed from inside and outside the building. Have vegetation trimmed back to allow emergency access and improve visibility and security.
8. Ask neighbors to report any suspicious activity or additional deterioration right away.
9. Pursue appropriate legal action to have the hazard abated through repair, renovation, or demolition.
10. Schedule regular company inspections to verify conditions have not deteriorated, and to take action if they have.



This abandoned building is boarded up to prevent unlawful access.

Abandoned buildings, especially in the current economic climate, provide an easy target for firesetters. Don't let these hazards kill or injure firefighters.



Eligible for Continuing Education Units (CEUs)
at www.nfaonline.dhs.gov

For archived downloads, go to:

www.usfa.dhs.gov/nfa/coffee-break/