
CITY OF CHICAGO

RULES



REGISTRATION AND SECURING OF VACANT BUILDINGS

LAST UPDATED: 10/22/2015




Mayor Rahm Emanuel

Commissioner Judy Frydland

BY AUTHORITY VESTED IN THE COMMISSIONER OF BUILDINGS PURSUANT TO SECTIONS 2-22-040(4), 13-12-125(d) AND 13-12-126(d) OF THE MUNICIPAL CODE OF CHICAGO, THE FOLLOWING RULES REGARDING THE REGISTRATION AND SECURING OF VACANT BUILDINGS ARE ADOPTED HEREIN.

By Order of the Commissioner:

Signed: 
Commissioner Judith Frydland

Date: 10/9/15

Published: 06/20/14
Effective: 07/01/14

As Amended

Published: 10/12/15
Effective: 10/22/15

RULES FOR REGISTRATION AND SECURING OF VACANT BUILDINGS

Rule 1. Registration and Fee Requirements

- A. All buildings deemed vacant in accordance with Section 13-12-125(e) must be electronically registered through the City of Chicago website: <https://ipweb.cityofchicago.org/VBR/> or any subsequent website designated by the Department of Buildings.
- B. All payments for vacant building fees as required by Section 13-12-125(a)(3) must be submitted through the City of Chicago website.
- C. Fees for a six (6) month registration period shall not exceed \$500.00, unless there are other violations that are not complied and the owner has been notified of said violations by the corporation counsel, in which case, the fees shall be capped at \$2,000.00.
- D. In order to place any sign or sign structure, as defined in Section 13-20-510, upon a vacant building it must be registered. This paragraph D shall not apply to any official sign or warning sign required by law.

Rule 2. Affirmative Defenses to Vacant Building Registration Requirements

- A. Registration requirements for vacant buildings will be waived if the owner can provide proof that:
 - 1. The unoccupied building is undergoing renovation or rehabilitation for which all necessary permits have been issued,
 - 2. Construction must commence within a reasonable time, once the required permits have been issued,
 - 3. The building has been actively listed for sale on MLS, but is otherwise secure,
 - 4. There is a building that is secure, but is the subject of a probate action, action to quiet title, or other ownership dispute currently being adjudicated in a court or tribunal of competent jurisdiction, or
 - 5. If any of the above listed conditions cease to exist and the building remains vacant, it must be registered within thirty (30) days.
- B. All buildings that otherwise are permitted to waive registration requirements must maintain the property in accordance with Section 13-12-135 for as long as it remains vacant.

Rule 3. Methods for Securing Vacant Buildings

A. Locations required to be secured include the following:

1. All openings in a structure which may be accessed from ground level and/or within eight (8) feet in any direction of an exterior stairway, fire escape, ramp, porch or other exterior construction reachable from ground level or a public way shall be secured to prevent entry by unauthorized persons, and
2. One building entrance shall be secured with a door of either solid core wood or steel construction, having no window in the door, and the door shall be securely locked to allow access only to authorized persons. Said door shall be secured with a through-bolted hasp and padlock if the door swings in.

B. Materials approved or disapproved to comply with Rule 3 include:

1. A poly(methyl methacrylate) (PMMA), polycarbonate (PC) or steel panel covering, approved by the Department of Buildings, must be installed.
2. Plywood materials may be utilized to secure building for an initial six (6) month period. However, the use of plywood materials may be extended if prior approval from the Department of Buildings is obtained. Such materials shall be no less than five-eighths inch (5/8") thick, exterior grade.
3. Other materials, such as metal, masonry or concrete, which exceed the durability and reliability of foregoing standards, may be utilized.
4. Particle board, wafer board, masonite or other similar materials shall not be utilized for purposes of boarding-up a building.

C. General installation methods for plywood covering shall include:

1. The primary method of securing plywood boards shall be by the use of through-bolt compression fastening, using plywood on the exterior face and wood bracing constructed of minimum two inch by four inch (2" by 4") nominal lumber installed on the interior side of the opening to be secured, perpendicular to the long dimension of the opening. Such bracing shall extend at least six inches (6") beyond the edge of the opening on each side in order to be securely braced against the building structure.
2. Mechanical fasteners used for wood board-up materials shall be round-headed, non-slotted carriage bolts no less than three-eighths inch (3/8") thick in diameter with washers and nuts on the interior face.

3. Wood construction used to secure a building opening shall contain at least one bolt in each corner and additional bolts no more than four feet (4') on center continuously along the perimeter. Each bolt shall fully penetrate the wood bracing on the interior side of the opening.
 4. In the event that the through-bolt compression fastening is impossible due to the construction or condition of the opening, the opening shall be covered with plywood secured with minimum three foot (3') long wood screws fastened on four feet (4') centers around the circumference of the opening.
- D. General installation methods for poly(methyl methacrylate) (PMMA) covering shall include:
1. Cut the panels to fit the window size. A 120 VAC (volts alternating current) operated saw is required.
 2. Cut the crossbar material to rest squarely on the window casing. A minimum of two crossbars shall be used per window.
 3. Drill four (4) one-half inch (1/2") holes in the four corners of the panel. Drill seven-sixteenth inch (7/16") holes through the crossbars to match the panels.
 4. Place four (4) three-eighths inch (3/8") carriage bolts through the panels and put panel in place. Screw one security nut onto each of the carriage bolts. Place the crossbars onto the bolts and screw another security bolt onto each of the carriage bolts. Tighten both sides so that they cannot be loosened by hand.
- E. Continuing obligation to maintain building in secured condition shall include:
1. In the event that a building becomes open after compliance with these minimum standards, owners or other responsible parties shall not be relieved of their obligation under law to re-secure immediately and maintain said building in a secure manner.

Rule 4. Penalties

- A. Any person who violates any provision of this section or of the rules and regulations issued hereunder shall be fined not less than \$500.00 and not more than \$1,000.00 for each offense. Every day that a violation continues shall constitute a separate and distinct offense. Fines assessed under this chapter shall be recoverable from the owner and shall be a lien on the property.
- B. Nothing in these rules and regulations shall prohibit the City of Chicago from taking any and all actions and legal remedies allowed by law.

Rule 5. Non-limitation of Authority and Compliance with Law

Nothing in these Rules is intended to limit the powers or authority of the City of Chicago, the Department of Buildings or the powers or authority of any other City departments; nor are these Rules intended to relieve any person or entity from full compliance with any other provisions of the Municipal Code of Chicago or other rules and regulations promulgated by the department or any other City department.

Rule 6. Reservation of Rights

The Commissioner reserves the right to amend these Rules at any time in accordance with law.

Rule 7. Saving and Severability

The provisions of these Rules are severable. If any part of these Rules or Rule is declared invalid or unconstitutional, that declaration shall not affect the part or parts which remains.