

Building Safety in Denver

Fire inspectors from the **Denver Fire Department** inspect commercial properties on an annual basis and in response to emergencies and community concerns. Building inspectors from **Denver Community Planning and Development** inspect buildings in order to check recently permitted construction, and also in response to emergencies and community concerns. Most inspections are routine in nature, but occasionally a building has safety failures that clearly put its occupants or the general public in danger.

In any inspection, **life safety is our primary concern**. Vacating a building of its occupants is always a last resort, but may be necessary when safety failures can't be immediately remedied.

In our city, and cities all over the United States, a set of internationally-recognized building and fire codes ensures basic safety for people no matter who they are, where the building is or what it's used for.

Based on these codes, there are some conditions that pose an immediate life safety hazard and require that city inspectors take action. Each of the items listed on page 2 of this sheet are critical to the safety and well-being of a building's occupants. These issues may cause inspectors to vacate a building of people – regardless of whether people work there, live there, shop there, etc.

Because every situation and building is unique, other safety considerations might arise that could be the cause of vacating a building. Denver Building and Fire Code sections 105 and 110.1 and the International Existing Building Code (IEBC) section 202 give more detailed definitions of conditions that make a building unsafe. Property owners and commercial tenants should read the code sections that apply to their specific buildings or projects. All codes may be found at denvergov.org/buildingcode.

(continued)



Immediate Life-Safety Hazards

Critical failures that would likely result in vacating a building for occupants' safety

- Lack of appropriate egress from the space and/or building, meaning not enough exits, unsafe or unreliable exits, or windows too small for an adult to fit through
- The structure meets the building code definition of *dangerous*:
 - The building or structure has collapsed, has partially collapsed, has moved off its foundation, or lacks the necessary support of the ground.
 - There is a significant risk of collapse, detachment or dislodgement of any portion of the building or structure based on the use the structure is designed for.
- An immediate fire hazard is present, such as:
 - Open and exposed electrical wiring
 - Overloaded electrical service(s) or panel(s)
 - Improperly vented gas-fired appliances
 - Unsafe or leaking gas lines or gas appliances
- The building's roof is exposed and there is inadequate protection from the elements.
- Too many people are using the space for a purpose for which it was not designed (known as "illegal or improper occupancy"), causing any of the following to be true:
 - Insufficient fire safety precautions such as smoke detectors or carbon monoxide detectors and/or a building sprinkler system (if applicable), and associated risks cannot be easily mitigated;
 - Non-fire-rated materials (like plywood and other ad hoc materials) used to separate spaces.
- Hazardous uses within the living unit including but not limited to: spray of flammable liquids including aerosols, welding, cutting, open torches and grinding operations



Please note that this document does not comprise every law, code, or circumstance under which a building may be ordered vacated. Should you have any questions about the condition of your property or want to request an inspection, please call 3-1-1.