

ADOPTION OF PLACARDS

One of the functions of the ATC-20 publication was the development of placards that clearly identified the condition of buildings to owners and occupants. These placards were first used after the Loma Prieta earthquake in 1989. A panel was convened by the Applied Technology Council to review ATC-20 and update the document based on the Loma Prieta experience. One of the major revisions to come from that panel was to revise the three placards. These revised placards have been included in the *Post-Disaster Safety Assessment Program*, and in this document.

Placards have been widely used in past earthquakes to denote the condition of buildings and structures. In many cases, the placards have been those recommended in the ATC-20 publication. Unfortunately, most jurisdictions have not officially adopted placards. Technically, these unofficial placards represent only a recommendation from those who performed the evaluation. As a recommendation, the placards do not carry the weight of law and cannot be enforced. Adopting the placards by ordinance makes them official and enforceable. Once the placards have been adopted and before they are printed, the jurisdiction seal, ordinance number, and the responsible department's name, address, and phone number should be added.

In past events, there have been a number of reports of placards being removed from buildings by owners or tenants. In other cases, there have been reports of the unauthorized change of placards, usually from UNSAFE to one of the other categories. In both cases, adopting placards by ordinance allows the jurisdiction to enforce the posting with local police or sheriffs if necessary. Placards are placed on a building to protect the owner, tenant, and the general public. No action should be permitted that would compromise such protection.

It should be remembered that only authorized representatives of the jurisdiction may place official placards. For this reason, the *Post-Disaster Safety Assessment Program* (SAP) recommends that the safety assessment evaluators be deputized. If this is done, evaluators can place official jurisdiction placards when they complete their evaluations. If evaluators are not deputized, the jurisdiction must send out its personnel to post the buildings.

Some jurisdictions have become concerned that they will become financially responsible for providing worker's compensation coverage if they deputize volunteers. In accordance with Article 17, Section 8657(b) of the *California Emergency Services Act*, local government is **not** financially responsible for providing the volunteers with worker's compensation coverage if the jurisdiction deputizes volunteers. The volunteering Safety Assessment Evaluators are registered with OES as Disaster Service Worker Volunteers and are provided worker's compensation coverage by the State of California. Evaluators who are State or local government employees are covered by their respective jurisdiction and respond under mutual aid agreements.

CALBO and OES encourage all jurisdictions to adopt the revised ATC-20 placards in order to have a uniform placard system in place throughout the state. To assist jurisdictions in this process, CALBO and OES have developed the following **model ordinance template** as a guide in adopting these revised placards. Please review the template and placards with your agency attorney. Once the placards have been adopted, these copies can have the necessary information added and be used to create reproducible masters.

We hope this document provides you with the assistance you need to accomplish this important task.

ORDINANCE NO. _____
AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF (TOWN OF, COUNTY OF, CITY AND COUNTY OF)
_____ STATE OF CALIFORNIA, ADDING A NEW CHAPTER _____
TO DIVISION _____ OF THE
MUNICIPAL CODE (COUNTY CODE), RELATING TO PLACARDS USED TO DENOTE
CONDITIONS RELATING TO CONTINUED OCCUPANCY OF BUILDINGS.

The City Council (County Board of Supervisors of) of the City of (County of, City and County
of) _____, State of California, ordains as follows:

Section 1. Chapter ___ is added to Division __ of Title __ of the City of (County of, City and
County of) _____ municipal (county) code, to read:

Chapter _____. Safety Assessment Placards.

Sections:

- _____ Intent
- _____ Application of Provisions
- _____ Definitions
- _____ Placards

Section _____ Intent

This chapter establishes standard placards to be used to indicate the condition of a structure for continued occupancy. The chapter further authorizes the Building Official and his or her authorized representatives to post the appropriate placard at each entry point to a building or structure upon completion of a safety assessment.

Section _____ Application of Provisions.

(a) The provisions of this chapter are applicable to all buildings and structures of all occupancies regulated by the City (Town, County, City and County) of _____. The Council (Board) may extend the provisions as necessary.

Section _____ Definitions.

(a) **Safety assessment** is a visual, non-destructive examination of a building or structure for the purpose of determining the condition for continued occupancy.

Section _____ Placards.

(a) The following are verbal descriptions of the official jurisdiction placards to be used to designate the condition for continued occupancy of buildings or structures. Copies of actual placards are attached.

(1) **INSPECTED - Lawful Occupancy Permitted** is to be posted on any building or structure wherein no apparent structural hazard has been found. This placard is not intended to mean that there is no damage to the building or structure.

(2) **RESTRICTED USE** is to be posted on each building or structure that has been damaged wherein the damage has resulted in some form of restriction to the continued occupancy. The individual who posts this placard will note in general terms the type of damage encountered and will clearly and concisely note the restrictions on continued occupancy.

(3) **UNSAFE - Do Not Enter or Occupy** is to be posted on each building or structure that has been damaged such that continued occupancy poses a threat to life safety. Buildings or structures posted with this placard shall not be entered under any circumstance except as authorized in writing by the Building Official, or his or her authorized representative. Safety assessment teams shall be authorized to enter these buildings at any time. This placard is not to be

used or considered as a demolition order. The individual who posts this placard will note in general terms the type of damage encountered.

(b) This ordinance number, the name of the jurisdiction, its address, and phone number shall be permanently affixed to each placard.

(c) Once it has been attached to a building or structure, a placard is not to be removed, altered or covered until done so by an authorized representative of the Building Official. It shall be unlawful for any person, firm or corporation to alter, remove, cover or deface a placard unless authorized pursuant to this section.

INSPECTED

LAWFUL OCCUPANCY PERMITTED

This structure has been inspected (as indicated below) and no apparent structural hazard has been found.

Inspected Exterior Only

Inspected Exterior and Interior

Report any unsafe condition to local authorities; reinspection may be required.

Inspector comments:

Facility Name and Address:

Date: _____

Time: _____

(Caution: Aftershocks since inspection may increase damage and risk)

This facility was inspected under emergency conditions by:

Jurisdiction
Address
Telephone

Inspector ID/Agency:

**Do Not Remove, Alter or Cover this Placard
until Authorized by the Building Official
(Municipal Code Section XXX)**

RESTRICTED USE

Caution: This structure has been inspected and found to be damaged as described below:

Entry, occupancy and lawful use are restricted as indicated below:

Facility Name and Address:

Date: _____

Time: _____

(Caution: Aftershocks since inspection may increase damage and risk.)

This facility was inspected under emergency conditions by:

Jurisdiction

Address

Telephone Number

Inspector ID/Agency

**Do not Remove, Alter or Cover this Placard
until Authorized by the Building Official
(Municipal Code Section XXX)**

UNSAFE

DO NOT ENTER OR OCCUPY (THIS PLACARD IS NOT A DEMOLITION ORDER)

This structure has been inspected, found to be seriously damaged and is unsafe to occupy, as described below:

Do not enter, except as specifically authorized in writing by jurisdiction. Entry may result in death or injury.

Facility Name and Address:

Date: _____
Time: _____

This facility was inspected under emergency conditions by:

Jurisdiction
Address
Telephone Number

Inspector ID/Agency

**Do Not Remove, Alter or Cover this Placard
until Authorized by the Building Official
(Municipal Code Section XXX)**

