

Chapter 55
BUILDINGS, DANGEROUS

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[HISTORY: Adopted by the Board of Supervisors of the Township of Scott at time of adoption of Code; see Ch. 1, General Provisions, Art. I. Amendments noted where applicable.]

GENERAL REFERENCES

Property maintenance — See Ch. 104.

§ 55-1. Definitions and word usage.

- A. As used in this chapter, the following terms shall have the meanings indicated, unless a different meaning clearly appears from the context:

BUILDING — An independent structure having a roof supported by columns or walls resting on its own foundation and includes dwelling, garage, barn, stable, shed, greenhouse, mobile home, plant, factory, warehouse, school or similar structure.

DANGEROUS BUILDING — Any of the following buildings or structures:

- (1) Those whose interior walls or other vertical structural members list, lean or buckle to such an extent that a plumb line passing through the center of gravity falls outside of the middle third of its base.
- (2) Those which, exclusive of the foundation, show damage or deterioration to thirty-three percent (33%) of the supporting member or members or damage or deterioration to fifty percent (50%) of the nonsupporting enclosing or outside walls or covering.
- (3) Those which have improperly distributed loads upon the floors or roofs or in which the same are overloaded or which have insufficient strength to be reasonably safe for the purpose used.
- (4) Those which have been damaged by fire, wind or other causes so as to be dangerous to life, safety or the general health and welfare of the occupants or the public.
- (5) Those which are so damaged, dilapidated, decayed, unsafe, unsanitary or vermin-infested or which so utterly fail to provide the amenities essential to decent living that

they are unfit for human habitation or are likely to cause sickness or disease so as to work injury to the health, safety or general welfare of those living therein.

- (6) Those which have parts thereof which are so attached that they may fall and injure property or members of the public.
- (7) Those which lack illumination, ventilation or sanitation facilities or because of another condition are unsafe, unsanitary or dangerous to the health, safety or general welfare of the occupants or the public.
- (8) Those which because of their location are unsanitary or otherwise dangerous to the health or safety of the occupants or the public.
- (9) Those existing in violation of any provision of the Building Code, Fire Prevention Code or other ordinances of Scott Township.

DWELLING — Any building which is wholly or partly used or intended to be used for living or sleeping by human occupants.

DWELLING UNIT — Any room or group of rooms located within a dwelling and forming a single habitable unit with facilities which are used or intended to be used for living or sleeping by human occupants.

EXTERMINATION — The control and elimination of insects, rodents or other pests by eliminating their harborage places, removing or making inaccessible materials that may serve as their food, poisoning, spraying, fumigating or trapping or by any other recognized and legal pest elimination methods.

GARBAGE — Animal and vegetable wastes resulting from the handling, preparation, cooking and consumption of food.

INFESTATION — The presence, within or around a dwelling, of any insects, rodents or other pests.

OWNER — Any person who, alone or jointly or severally with others:

- (1) Shall have legal title to any dwelling or dwelling unit, with or without accompanying actual possession thereof; or
- (2) Shall have charge, care or control of any dwelling or dwelling unit as owner or agent of the owner or as executor, executrix, administrator, administratrix or guardian of the estate of the owner. Any such person thus representing the actual owner shall be bound to comply with the provisions of this chapter and with rules and regulations adopted pursuant thereto to the same extent as if he were the owner.

PERSON — Any individual, firm, corporation, association or partnership or other legal entity.

PROPERTY — A piece, parcel, lot or tract of land.

RUBBISH — Combustible and noncombustible waste materials, except garbage, including residue from the burning of wood, coal, coke and other combustible material, paper, rags, cartons, boxes, wood, excelsior, rubber, leather, tree branches, yard trimmings, tin cans, metals, mineral matter, glass, crockery and dust.

STRUCTURE — Anything constructed or erected with a fixed or ascertainable location on the ground or in water, whether or not affixed to the ground or anchored in the water, including buildings, walls, fences, platforms, docks, wharves, billboards, signs and walks.

- B. Whenever the words “dwelling,” “dwelling unit” or “premises” are used in this chapter, they shall be construed as though they were followed by the words “or any part thereof.”

§ 55-2. Dangerous buildings declared nuisances.

All dangerous buildings within the terms of § 55-1 are hereby declared to be public nuisances and shall be repaired, vacated or demolished as herein provided.

§ 55-3. Standards for repair, vacation or demolition.

The following standards shall be followed in substance by the Code Enforcement Officer of the township in ordering repair, vacation or demolition:

- A. If the dangerous building can reasonably be repaired so that it will no longer exist in violation of the terms of this chapter, it shall be ordered to be repaired.
- B. If the dangerous building is in such condition as to make it dangerous to the health, safety or general welfare of its occupants or the public and is so placarded, it shall be ordered to be vacated within such length of time, not exceeding thirty (30) days, as is reasonable.
- C. No dwelling or dwelling unit which has been placarded as unfit for human habitation shall again be used for human habitation until written approval is secured from and such placard is removed by the Code Enforcement Officer. The Code Enforcement Officer shall remove such placard whenever the defect or defects upon which the placarding action were based have been eliminated.
- D. If a dangerous building is fifty percent (50%) or more damaged or decayed or deteriorated from its original condition; if a dangerous building cannot be repaired so that it will no longer exist in violation of the terms of this chapter; or if a dangerous building is a fire hazard existing or erected in violation of the terms of this chapter or any ordinance of the township or statute of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, it shall be ordered to be demolished, provided that the cost of repairs to rectify or remove the conditions constituting the nuisance exceed fifty percent (50%) of the market value of the building at the time demolition is proposed.

§ 55-4. Duties of Code Enforcement Officer.

- A. The Code Enforcement Officer shall inspect on a regular basis dwellings, buildings and structures to determine whether any conditions exist which render such premises dangerous buildings within the terms of § 55-1 above.
- B. Whenever an inspection discloses that a dwelling, building or structure has become a public nuisance, the Code Enforcement Officer shall issue a written notice to the person or persons responsible therefor. The notice:

- (1) Shall be in writing.
 - (2) Shall include a statement of the reasons it is being issued.
 - (3) Shall state a reasonable time to rectify the conditions constituting the nuisance or to remove and demolish the dwelling, building or structure.
 - (4) Shall be served upon the owner or his agent or the occupant, as the case may require.
 - (a) Except in emergency cases and where the owner, occupant, lessee or mortgagee is absent from the township, all notices shall be deemed to be properly served upon the owner, occupant or other person having an interest in the dangerous building if a copy thereof is served upon him personally or if a copy thereof is posted in a conspicuous place in or about the structure affected by the notice or if he is served with such notice by any other method authorized or required under the laws of the commonwealth.
 - (b) Except emergency cases, in all other cases where the owner, occupant, lessee or mortgagee is absent from the township, all notices or orders provided for herein shall be sent by registered mail to the owner, occupant and all other persons having an interest in said building, as shown by the records of the County Recorder of Deeds, to the last known address of each, and a copy of such notice shall be posted in a conspicuous place on the dangerous building to which it relates. Such mailing and posting shall be deemed adequate service.
 - (5) May contain an outline of remedial action which, if taken, will effect compliance with the provisions of this chapter and with the rules and regulations adopted pursuant thereto.
- C. Appear at all hearings conducted by the Board of Supervisors and testify as to the condition of dangerous buildings.

§ 55-5. Hearings.

- A. Any person affected by any notice which has been issued in connection with the enforcement of any provision of this chapter may request and shall be granted a hearing on the matter before the Board of Supervisors, provided that such person shall file with the Township Secretary a written petition requesting such hearing and setting forth a brief statement of the grounds therefor within ten (10) days after the day the notice was served. Upon receipt of such petition, the Township Secretary shall set a time and place for such hearing and shall give the petitioner written notice thereof. At such hearing the petitioner shall be given an opportunity to be heard and to show why such notice should be modified or withdrawn. The hearing shall be commenced not later than thirty (30) days after the day on which the petition was filed.
- B. After such hearing the Board of Supervisors shall sustain, modify or withdraw the notice. If the Board of Supervisors sustains or modifies such notice, it shall be deemed to be an order. Any notice served pursuant to this chapter shall automatically become an order if a written petition for a hearing is not filed with the Township Secretary within ten (10) days after such notice is served.

- C. Any aggrieved party may appeal the final order to the Court of Common Pleas in accordance with the provisions of the Judicial Code.¹

§ 55-6. Removal of notice prohibited.

No person shall remove or deface the notice of dangerous building, except as provided in § 55-3C.

§ 55-7. Emergency cases.

Whenever the Code Enforcement Officer finds that an emergency exists which requires immediate action to protect the public health, he may, without notice or hearing, issue an order reciting the existence of such an emergency and requiring that such action be taken as is necessary to meet the emergency. Notwithstanding the other provisions of this chapter, such order shall be effective immediately. Any person to whom such order is directed shall comply therewith immediately but upon petition to the Code Enforcement Officer shall be afforded a hearing as soon as possible. After such hearing, depending upon the findings as to whether the provisions of this chapter have been complied with, the Code Enforcement Officer shall continue such order in effect or modify or revoke it. The costs of such emergency repair, vacation or demolition of such dangerous building shall be collected in the same manner as provided herein for other cases.

§ 55-8. Abatement by township.

If the owner, occupant, mortgagee or lessee fails to comply with the order of the Code Enforcement Officer within the time specified in the notice issued by him and no petition for a hearing is filed within ten (10) days thereafter or following a hearing by the Board of Supervisors where the order is sustained thereby, the Code Enforcement Officer shall cause such building or structure to be repaired, vacated or demolished as determined by the Board of Supervisors in accordance with the standards hereinbefore provided. The township may collect the cost of such repair, vacation or demolition together with a penalty of ten percent (10%) of such cost, in the manner provided by law; or the township may seek injunctive relief in a court of competent jurisdiction pursuant to the rules of civil procedure.

§ 55-9. Violations and penalties.

Any person, firm or corporation who shall violate any provision of this chapter shall, upon conviction thereof, be sentenced to pay a fine of not more than one thousand dollars (\$1,000.), plus costs of prosecution, and, in default of payment thereof, shall be imprisoned for a term not to exceed thirty (30) days. Every day that a violation of this chapter continues shall constitute a separate offense.

¹ Editor's Note: See 42 Pa.C.S.A. § 101 et seq.