

# Residential Vacant Property Certification

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Registration

#### ***I own vacant residential property in Ypsilanti Township. Do I have to register my property?***

Yes. Single family and duplex residential property that is unoccupied for more than 30 days must be registered. Failure to register can result in fines, additional fees, and potential legal action. This includes unoccupied homes offered for sale.

#### ***Are there exceptions for certain circumstances?***

Yes. Vacant property means a single family or duplex residential structure that remains unoccupied for a period in excess of 30 days and includes unoccupied homes listed for sale.

Vacant property does not mean property that is temporarily unoccupied while the residents are away on vacation, tending to personal matters or business, or property that is not intended by the owner to be left vacant.

#### ***What is the definition of "owner?"***

Owner means any person or entity with legal or equitable ownership or possessory interest in any residential structure. The owner shall include, but not be limited to: a bank, credit union, trustee, financial institution or trust which is in possession (in whole or in part) of the real property, foreclosing a lien or mortgage interest in the affected property, but may or may not have legal or equitable title.

#### ***How much does it cost to register?***

It costs \$100 to register a vacant property which includes the cost of a safety and blight inspection. The registration is valid for one year and must be renewed annually for as long as the property remains vacant.

#### ***Are there other fees?***

Yes:

- If the property fails inspection the first time, a \$30 fee will be assessed for each re-inspection required to achieve code compliance.
- If a code enforcement officer is called to respond to an open unsecured house, a \$75 response fee will be assessed. If the township must hire a contractor to board up or padlock doors or windows, the cost of that work will also be passed along to the owner.
- Property owners discovered in violation of the law and who register as a result of code enforcement action will be assessed a \$50 late fee. If a title search is required to identify the property owner, the cost of the search will also be assessed.

- A \$150 fee will be assessed if the inspector must obtain an administrative search warrant authorized by a judge to inspect the property.

***What happens if fees are not paid?***

All fees that remain unpaid after 14 days written notice to the owner/management company shall be assessed against the property as a lien and placed on the tax roll.

**Inspections**

***Does my vacant property have to be inspected by the township?***

Yes. Upon registration your property will be scheduled for a safety & blight inspection by appointment.

***How much does it cost for an inspection?***

The cost of the first inspection is included in the \$100 registration fee.

***What happens if the inspector finds code violations that have to be fixed?***

If the inspector finds code violations that cannot be fixed on the spot, and the inspector must come back to verify the repairs, the owner will be charged a \$30 re-inspection fee for each return trip. Owners are encouraged to prepare for inspection in advance to avoid extra fees.

***What happens if I must make repairs that require a building permit?***

Certain types of repairs require a permit, such as replacing a furnace or water heater. If you are required to pay a separate permit fee to complete the repairs and those repairs are the only reason the inspector must come back, you will not also be charged a re-inspection fee.

***What happens if I miss a scheduled appointment?***

If you miss a scheduled appointment, you will be charged a “lock out/no show” fee equal to the inspection fee. Appointment times can be changed at no cost with a minimum of four (4) business days’ notice.

***What happens if the inspector cannot get inside the house for an inspection?***

If the inspector is unable to gain lawful access to the house, you will be charged a “lock out/no show” fee and will have to re-schedule the inspection.

***The property is bank owned or listed for sale and there is a lock box on the door. Can I provide the lock box code to allow your inspector to enter?***

Yes. In situations where a lock box is affixed to the door, the code may be provided by a responsible party and our inspector will enter and conduct the inspection.

***What happens if I refuse to allow the inspector inside the house?***

The inspector can apply to a district court judge to obtain an administrative search warrant allowing access to inspect the house. There is a separate fee that is assessed to recover the cost of obtaining a warrant.

***What will the inspector look for?***

Inspectors will be enforcing the Property Maintenance Code and will focus on safety and blight and the condition of utilities. Information about the inspection will be provided to you at the time of registration.

***How can I get my own copy of the Property Maintenance Code?***

The International Property Maintenance Code is available at no cost through the International Code Council website. Links to the site are available at [www.ytown.org](http://www.ytown.org).

**Utilities**

***Do I have to maintain utility services while the house remains vacant?***

Not necessarily. Gas and water service may be properly disconnected and the water pipes may be properly winterized to prevent burst pipes and water/mold damage.

Electric service may also be disconnected unless the house has a basement equipped with a sump pump system for storm water management. Sump pumps must be maintained in good working condition to prevent property damage. This may be accomplished by leaving electric service turned on or by installing a battery powered system.

***What documentation is required concerning utilities?***

The property registration form includes an affidavit that addresses utility services. Affidavit signatures must be notarized.

**Certificate of Compliance**

***Do I need a Certificate of Compliance?***

Yes. Upon successful completion of your inspection and payment of all fees, you will receive a Certificate of Compliance.

***How long is the Certificate of Compliance valid?***

The Certificate of Compliance is valid for one year, at which time you must apply for a new certificate for as long as the house remains vacant.

***What happens if I sell my property after I get a Certificate of Compliance?***

The law requires that you notify the Township if the property is sold or re-occupied, and to whom the property is transferred. The Certificate of Compliance will be closed at that time and your obligation under the law is over.