

# Little Falls Building Department PUBLIC INFORMATION HANDOUT

Date \_\_\_\_\_

This handout is intended to inform property owners of what the Little Falls Building Department will be doing to help make damaged homes and businesses functional again.

## Damage assessment inspections:

- The City Building Department will be sending out inspectors to inspect each home/structure suspected to have been damaged during the recent event.
- The purpose of these inspections is to identify which homes and businesses are safe to continue to occupy and to identify those structures which are unsafe. Inspectors will use a standard damage assessment inspection report form to identify the degree of damage to each structure. A copy of the report will be left at the building. The inspectors will also be ‘placarding’ each damaged structure to identify its occupancy worthiness. ‘Placards’ identify occupancy restrictions for the protection of the public and are posted on the front of each inspected building. It is anticipated all structures will be inspected by \_\_\_\_\_.
- If utilities (gas, water and electric) are not functional in your home or business and need to be reestablished:
  - If the structure has been placarded as ‘uninhabitable’ utilities will not be reestablished immediately.
  - If the structure has been placarded as ‘habitable’ utility companies must gain access to the structure in order to reestablish service. Please contact utility companies directly to coordinate:
    - Power Company – (800)-228-4966
    - Gas Company – (800)-245-2377
    - Telephone Company –(800)-244-1111
    - Cable TV – (800) 581-0081
  - For reestablishing water/sewer service (if non-functional) call the City - 320-616-5500
- Structure repairs:
  - Closing in a structure to protect it from the elements does not require a building permit. Examples include minor roof or shingle repair, covering a building with a tarp, minor glass repair and garage door repair/replacement.
  - Permanent repairs and/or alterations in conjunction with repairs will require the issuance of a building permit. Examples include:
    - Roof replacement
    - Residing
    - Any structural repairs
    - Foundation repairs
    - Electrical work
    - Plumbing work
    - Mechanical work
    - Fire sprinkler/alarm work (on commercial buildings)

For questions as to if a permit is required for proposed work, please contact the building department at **320-616-5500**

### How to obtain a permit:

- To obtain a building/plumbing/mechanical permit an application must be submitted to the City of Little Falls Building Department. Some permits can be issued immediately to homeowners and contractors while others may require a plan review. No permit will be issued on a structure until it has received the initial damage assessment inspection and it has been recorded. Permits will be issued ‘over the counter’ for reroofs, residing, window replacements and other minor repairs. Not issued immediately will be permits for structural repairs, alterations, additions, demolitions, commercial work and other significant work. These will require a plan review – ask the building official or inspector for estimated time frame. There is a fee for most permits to cover inspection services, however, most permit fees are included in insurance company reimbursements.
- Beware - following disaster events, the desire for immediate repairs should be tempered by a few precautions so that you do not fall victim to unscrupulous practices or scam artists.
  - Do not sign a contract until you have spoken with your insurance company.
  - Get contracts in writing.
  - Always use licensed contractors.
  - Exorbitant prices and some repairs may not be fully covered by insurance in spite of what some contractors may say. Show your estimate to your insurance agent before you sign a contract.
  - Watch for notifications and postings put out by the building department as frequent informational updates.
  - Obtaining building permits and using licensed contractors will provide the property owner additional protections and, is required by law.

### Reoccupying your home/business:

- If your home or business has been placard as ‘uninhabitable’ it means the structure can no longer be occupied for human habitation. In order for the home/business to be reclassified as ‘habitable’ the following steps are necessary:
  1. If repairs are not to be made by the property owner, any estimates or bid proposals should first be reviewed by your insurance agent to verify coverage.
  2. Obtain a building permit to repair those items listed on the Damage Assessment Report. Not all items in the report will affect habitability. Ask the building department which items must be repaired to gain occupancy. Note: some repairs, particularly to business properties will require architectural/engineering plans prior to permit issuance.
  3. Complete at least those repairs which affect habitability (if not by the property owner, by a licensed contractor).
  4. Schedule any necessary inspections listed on the permit(s) of the work in progress or completed work.
  5. Once that portion of the work affecting habitability has been approved by the building department, request they issue a conditional or temporary occupancy certificate which allows occupancy of the structure while other repairs are completed.

### Miscellaneous:

- For information on inspections, placards, building permits, utility reconnections and other structure related issues please contact the building department at **320-616-5500**. Office hours at City Hall are Monday through Friday 8 am to 5 pm.

**American Red Cross – (800)-560-7641    Salvation Army- (320)-252-4552**

**Department Of Labor & Industry – (651) 284-5069 or [www.doli.state.mn.us/contractor.html](http://www.doli.state.mn.us/contractor.html)**  
to verify Contractor Licensing.