

Miller, Diane M. (CDC/NIOSH/EID)

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Comments

The NIOSH Alert on Preventing Deaths and Injuries when Fighting Fires in Unoccupied Structures identifies many good practices that serve to improved firefighter safety. However, these apply in all structural firefighting contexts, not unoccupied structures in particular.

This document would send a stronger message if it focused more tightly on the unique issues surrounding unoccupied and vacant structures. Key points should include:

Development, implementation, and use of policies and procedures dealing with fires in unoccupied or vacant structures.

Reinforcement and practice of effective risk management during fireground operations (particularly where there is limited or no value (savable people or property)

Identification and marking of buildings that present particular hazard due to deteriorating structural conditions.

This document should use the cases presented to illustrate the key points and focus tightly on the unique hazards presented by unoccupied or vacant building, the risk to firefighters, and appropriate mitigation strategies.

As written, this message is diluted with a great deal of information that is simply good practice at all fire incidents.