

What You Should Know: I Own a Vacant Property

What is vacant property?

The Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) will classify a property as vacant when it has been unoccupied for a minimum of 30 consecutive days.

What impact can vacant properties have on the community?

Vacant properties can:

- Pose fire hazards
- Help to provide safe harbor for criminal activities
- Cause rodent infestation
- Become a dumping ground for trash and debris
- Decrease property values
- Discourage neighborhood stabilization

What happens after a property is reported as vacant?

DCRA will verify if the property is registered properly and inspect for compliance. If the property is not registered, the owner(s) will be notified by mail of their obligation.

If the property is noncompliant with DC Code 42-3131.12, DCRA will allow the owner the opportunity to correct any vacant property violations. If the owner fails to abate (fix) the violations, fines and penalties will be assessed.

DCRA has the authority to abate the violation and recover the funds by placing a lien on the property.

The Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) or DC Superior Court can administer fines up to \$2000 and possible incarceration of up to 90 days for properties that are not registered and maintained.

How can you find out if DCRA has taken action against a property and if it is registered as vacant?

Customer may check the Vacant Property List at dcra.dc.gov or call (202) 442-4332 for an update on the property's status.

How has the vacant property legislation changed?

The 2006 Nuisance Property Abatement Reform and Real Property Classification Emergency Amendment Act granted DCRA the authority to classify buildings vacant on December 28, 2006. OTR continues to determine whether a lot (with no building) is vacant.

The changes to this Act eliminated or modified the exceptions to vacant property classification by tightening the length of time a property can use an exception and requiring continuous improvement activity. For properties classified as vacant, DCRA now provides an administrative appeal. DCRA will issue a final determination within 30 days of the appeal. Customers have an option to appeal DCRA's final decision through the Board of Real Property Assessments and Appeals.

How does owning a vacant property affect the owners' tax bill?

Survey lists are submitted semi annually to the Office of Tax and Revenue (OTR), for tax recalculation. Owner(s) will be notified of the tax increase on their March and August tax statements.

What is the new tax rate for vacant properties?

OTR taxes vacant properties at the Class 3 rate: \$5 per \$100 of assessed value. (For Tax Year 2007, occupied residential properties are taxed at .88 cents per \$100 of assessed value; occupied commercial properties, at \$1.85.)