



**BALTIMORE  
HOUSING**

SHEILA DIXON  
Mayor

PAUL T. GRAZIANO  
Executive Director, HABC  
Commissioner, HCDC

## MEMORANDUM

To: The Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council  
c/o Karen Randle, Executive Secretary

From: Paul T. Graziano, Commissioner

Date: June 5, 2009

Re: **City Council Bill 09-0124R Razed and Vacant Houses - Notice to Disconnect Utilities**

The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has reviewed City Council Bill 09-0124R, which was introduced for the purpose of requesting the Commissioner of Housing, the Director of Construction and Demolition, the Director of Public Works, the Chief of the Bureau of Water and Waste Water Utility Billing Division, and the Senior Vice President, BGE Customer Relations & Account Services, to report to the City Council on the notification process for discontinuing utility services to properties that become vacant or are scheduled for demolition.

The recital section of City Council Bill 09-0124R generally captures the process employed by the DHCD regarding the abandonment of utilities upon demolishing a vacant structure. Our Department demolishes on average 200 structures per year. Each month, the Construction and Demolition office faxes a list of properties scheduled for demolition to the appropriate officials at the Department of Public Works' (DPW) Bureau of Water and Wastewater and BGE in order to abandon the utility service. If an accessible water meter remains active at the time of demolition, contractors have the capability to turn off the water at the valve on the property's meter in order to proceed with demolition. Direct contact from the field with DPW therefore is not necessary. In the circumstances where a demolition contract discovers that a gas line is still active, direct contact is made to a point person at BGE to shut off the service before proceeding safely.

It is important to note that by the time a property is razed by DHCD, a property owner of a vacant structure should have received sufficient notice over the months and years regarding both the condition of the property and any scheduled demolition. These notices, in addition to correspondence from other City agencies, should provide an owner ample time to make arrangements to disconnect utilities and thus prevent incurring accumulating fees. With regards to City-owned vacant property, DHCD officials, at the time of the property's acquisition, transmit a service request order to DPW's Revenue Measurement and Billings Division to take action to disconnect, abandon or maintain the water service as needed.

The Department of Housing and Community Development will provide additional information as needed during the scheduled hearing regarding the notification procedures for discontinuing utility service, as requested in City Council Bill 09-0124R.

PTG:pmd

cc: Ms. Angela Gibson  
Mr. Andrew Frank  
Ms. Diane Hutchins

