

Carver County Public Health Nuisance Program

Dawn Plumer & Tami LaGow



Healthy Carver for a Lifetime

Objectives

1. Define a public health nuisance
2. Review the state statute and Carver County's ordinance regarding public health nuisances
3. Understand the Carver County's program and procedures to identify and abate a public health nuisance



What is a public health nuisance?

“A public health nuisance is any activity or failure to act that adversely affects public health; it often relates to a source of filth or sickness that provides the opportunity for the spread of communicable disease.”

Minnesota Statute 145A

- [Carver County Chapter 55](#)



Public Health Nuisances in Carver County

- Carver County's nuisance ordinance was passed in June 2013

2018

❖ 11 cases

2019

❖ 16 cases so far



CASE STUDY

Tami LaGow– Carver County Public Health

Dawn Plumer– Carver County Public Health

City Building Inspector



Significance

- Referral from a church member who visited weekly
- Hoarding, accumulation of personal belongings, filth
- Very limited egress
- Poor building structure
- Mobile home built in 1974
- Possible vulnerable adult living with spouse and adult son

PHnu: Telephone Screening and Intake Form

Date referral received: _____
Carver County Staff person receiving call: _____

Referral Source: _____
Organization: _____
Relationship: _____
Phone: (____) ____-____

Occupant(s): _____
Kids: _____ Older adults _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____
Type of building/property: _____
Parcel ID (PID): _____

Owner (if other than the occupant): _____
Phone: _____
Address: _____

Description of Problem:

- ☐ presence of human or animal waste
- ☐ rodents or insects/vermin
- ☐ rotting food
- ☐ are utilities and plumbing operational
- ☐ are there problems with blocked exits
- ☐ excess accumulation of trash/personal belongings or combustibles
- ☐ may pose a health threat/injury to others that enter the building

Notes:

Pets/animals (Number and type): _____

Notes:



Fact Sheet

A public health nuisance is different from a public nuisance or a code violation. It may be a public health nuisance if it: (1) can make people sick, (2) cause an infestation of insects or rodents, or (3) can pose a health threat/injury to others who may enter the building.

Examples of a public health nuisance include:

- Accumulation of refuse or debris
- Human or animal feces
- Rotting food waste
- Evidence of rodent or insect infestation
- Accumulation of solid waste
- Lack of water or sewage disposal
- Limited or blocked egress to windows and doors
- Number and type of live animals that might be injurious or dangerous to the health and safety of any individual or to the public in general

It is important to acknowledge that a “messy” or “cluttered” building is not necessarily a public health nuisance.

What is the role of Public Health?

Minnesota Statute 145A defines a “public health nuisance” as any activity or failure to act that adversely affects the public health. Minnesota Statute 145A gives the local board of health or its agent the authority to remove or abate the threat within a specified time.

How does Public Health find out that a Public Health Nuisance exists?

Public Health Nuisances may occur anywhere including: residential homes, rental properties, open spaces, commercial buildings, or businesses. Referrals can come from anyone who suspects a public health nuisance exists. Referrals may be made by property owners, tenants, neighbors, family, concerned citizens or law enforcement.



Preparing for inspection

- Contact property to schedule inspection**
 - May approach property without prior notice
- Determine if there is any existing information, for example, do they have any type of county services already in place?
- Gather needed items
- Contact law enforcement for escort

Safety

- Law Enforcement is on site during investigation
- Safety is top priority – if in doubt of team safety, leave the property
- Often times, within the first few minutes we will have a pretty good understanding of the situation

















Inspection

- Wear appropriate safety clothing and equipment
- Notify property owner/renter why investigation is being completed
- Two staff present
 - One will complete check-list
 - One will take photos



PHnu: Site Visit Notes

Resident: _____

Address: _____

Contact Information: _____

Partners:

Name	Organization	Phone

Problematic safety problems:	Initial Inspection Date	Re-Inspection Date
Smoke / CO detectors		
Would it be difficult for emergency personnel to move equipment through the property?		
Are any stairwells unsafe?		
Is there a danger of falling due to the clutter?		
Visible Structural damage		
Rotten food		
Insect or rodent infestation		
Egress through the home		
Trash/Garbage		
Accumulation of Fecal matter		
Accumulation of personal property		
Dead Animal(s)		
Utilities Operational (Water, Electricity, Heat)		
Large number or dangerous animals		

First Order to Abate



Carver County
Health and Human Services
Government Center
600 East Fourth Street • Chaska, MN 55318-2102



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October 12, 2017

Francis & Nancy [REDACTED]
Norwood Young America, MN 55368

RE: Carver County Public Health: First Order to Abate a Public Health Nuisance at [REDACTED]

Dear Francis & Nancy [REDACTED]:

Pursuant to authority granted to the Carver County Public Health Department under M.S. 145A.04, Subd. 8, and Carver County Code of Ordinances Chapter 55, be advised that an inspection was conducted on October 5, 2017 by the Carver County Public Health Department. It has been determined that a Public Health Nuisance exists at the above referenced location.

Specifically, the Department has identified the following conditions:

1. Excessive accumulation of personal belongings throughout the home including entry way, living room, kitchen, bathroom and bedrooms.
2. Flooring was heavily soiled and unsanitary in bedroom and bathroom.

This is an official notice to Francis & Nancy [REDACTED], owner of the property to remove or abate the threat to the public's health as soon as possible. If this situation is not remedied, or showing progress, by October 23, 2017, the County will take the steps necessary to abate and will assess the costs to the owner as provided in M.S. 145A.08, Subd. 2 and Carver County Code of Ordinance Chapter 55. Any person in violation of any provision of Chapter 55 shall be guilty of a misdemeanor per section 55.14 of the ordinance.

As the responsible party for this property, Francis & Nancy [REDACTED] are hereby ordered to abate the public health nuisance as follows:

1. Organize and/or remove personal belongings to create 36" wide egress to all doors and windows throughout home.
2. Clean and/or remove all soiled and/or unsanitary flooring in bedroom and bathroom.
3. Remove garbage from the home.

Francis and Nancy [REDACTED]
October 12, 2017
Page 2

Pursuant to Carver County Code of Ordinances section 55.13, when a public health nuisance is declared, an owner and/or an occupant of the affected property may appeal the declaration, including an order for abatement or remediation from the Board of Health, by filing a written request with the Board of Health for an administrative hearing within ten (10) calendar days of the date of service, exclusive of the day of service. Written request should be delivered to Carver County Public Health, 600 East 4th Street, Chaska, MN 55318. (Enclosed: Section 55.13 Public Health Nuisance Appeals Process)

Dated: October 12, 2017. This public health nuisance must be abated by the follow-up inspection conducted on October 23, 2017 at 12pm.

Sincerely,

Dr. Richard Scott
Public Health Manager & CHS Administrator
(952) 361-1320

Cc: Rod Franks, Health and Human Services Division Director
Laura Jaunich, Assistant Carver County Attorney



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Limitations



October 25, 2017

David LaGore
Public Health Specialist
Carver County Health and Human Services
600 East 8th Street
Clover, MN 55319

Subject: Assess the condition of the home located at 414 Railroad St, Norwood, Young America

Ms. LaGore:

On Monday, October 23, 2017 I joined you at the above captioned address to make an inspection and assessment of the manufactured home of Frances and Henry Green.

The home's exterior appears to be in poor condition, with damage to doors (sash), windows (sash and missing glazing), siding (loose or missing) and the roof (depression above the living room area which is the probable cause of the water infiltration and interior ceiling damage).

The home's interior shows damage to the ceiling, which is especially severe in the living room where the ceiling has sagged 12 inches in the area that corresponds to the depression in the roof. There are holes in the floor at both doors due to rot from water infiltration. Electrical appears to be servicing most areas of the home through the use of extension cords. Many of these cords appear to be run directly to cooking, light fixtures, receptacles and a ceiling fan. Water piping has been installed to wall surfaces, which suggests that there have been issues of water piping freezing. Smoke detectors and a carbon monoxide detector are damaged or missing. There is clutter and piles of boxes in many areas that add to the fire load of the home and also create an issue of movement throughout the home.

It is my opinion that the home is unsafe for occupancy due to structural and egress issues, and the potential for a fire hazard to the occupants and neighboring homes due to their close proximity. I feel the home is also a health hazard due to the unsanitary conditions and the inability to be able to clean and maintain the interior. I also believe that due to the age and severity of the condition of the home, it would not be cost effective to repair the structure.

Below is a section from the 2015 Minnesota Building Code Administration that lays out some of the qualifications for an unsafe building.

763.479.1720 • Fax 763.479.3095 • P.O. Box 248, Clove, Minnesota 55337

UNSAFE BUILDINGS OR STRUCTURES

A building or structure regulated by the code is unsafe, for purposes of this part, if it is reasonably unsafe, not provided with adequate egress, a fire hazard, or otherwise dangerous to human life.

Building service equipment that is regulated by the code is unsafe, for purposes of this part, if it is a fire, electrical or health hazard, or otherwise dangerous, or otherwise dangerous to human life. Use of a building, structure, or building service equipment constituting a hazard to public health, or public welfare because of inadequate maintenance, disrepair, deterioration, fire hazard, electrical damage, or contamination is, for the purposes of this part, an unsafe building, structure, system, facility, or other equipment, or other building or structure that is unsafe, for purposes of this part, if it is a fire, electrical or health hazard, or otherwise dangerous, or otherwise dangerous to human life.

The building official shall order any building or portion of a building to be vacated if continued use is dangerous to the health, or safety of the occupants. The building official shall have the authority to order, discontinuation of building services, or the building, structure, or system, regulated by the code, in case of an emergency or imminence to life or property. The code shall be in writing and state the reasons for the action.

All unsafe buildings, structures, or appendages are public nuisances and must be abated by repair, rehabilitation, demolition, or removal according to Minnesota Statutes, Sections 46A.13 to 46A.24.

Sincerely,

Dave LaGore
Building Inspector
City of Norwood, Young America



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Carver County
Health and Human Services
Government Center
600 East Fourth Street • Chaska, MN 55318-2102



November 15, 2017

[REDACTED]

RE: Public Health Nuisance at [REDACTED]

Dear Francis & Nancy Green:

Pursuant to authority granted to Carver County Public Health Department under M.S. 145A.04, Subd. 8, and Carver County Code of Ordinances Chapter 55, an inspection was conducted at [REDACTED] by an agent of the Carver County Community Health Board on October 23, 2017 and found the following:

1. Organized and/or removed personal belongings to create 36" wide egress to all doors and windows throughout home.

Based on the inspection the Carver County Board of Health declares the public health nuisance abated.

For your safety, Carver County Public Health urges you to address the unsafe structural issues of your home. The structure of your home is beyond the scope of Public Health Nuisance; however your safety is of priority to Carver County. If you would like to learn about alternative living options, please reach out to us.

Your cooperation is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Dr. Richard Scott
Public Health Manager & CHS Administrator
(952) 361-1320

Cc: Rod Franks, Health and Human Services Division Director
Laura Jaunich, Assistant Carver County Attorney

CARVER COUNTY
Healthy Carver for a Lifetime

Office (952) 361-1329 | Fax (952) 361-1360 | www.co.carver.mn.us



Abated, but...

Based on the inspection the Carver County Board of Health declares the public health nuisance abated.

For your safety, Carver County Public Health urges you to address the unsafe structural issues of your home. The structure of your home is beyond the scope of Public Health Nuisance; however your safety is of priority to Carver County. If you would like to learn about alternative living options, please reach out to us.



Lessons learned

- Uncooperative resident became cooperative after relationship was established
- City involvement
 - Building inspector came with us on second visit, but only made recommendations, no mandates
 - Partnered with Human Services (MAPT) group to look for a comprehensive solution - none was found
- VA was ruled out
 - Clean out was enough to abate the nuisance, but living conditions were still a concern

Lessons learned

- When working within the Phnu frame work, we have limited ability for force change outside of the abatement.
- Lack of smoke detectors/structure is outside of our scope.
- Getting others involved whenever possible.
- Important to be part of groups such as Multidisciplinary Adult Protection Team (MAPT)

Public Health Nuisance Procedure

- Complaint received- review for potential referrals for other services
- Complete screening/intake form
- Log complaint, as appropriate, in Nuisance Tracker
- Triage complaint with PHnu team
- Notify subject of complaint by telephone or letter
- **Schedule inspection**
- **Prepare for inspection**
- **Conduct inspection**
- Post inspection operation/debrief

PHnu found

- Case Study “Two Sisters”
- Tami LaGow– Carver County Public Health
- Dawn Plumer– Carver County Public Health
- Adult Protection Report filled by a family member

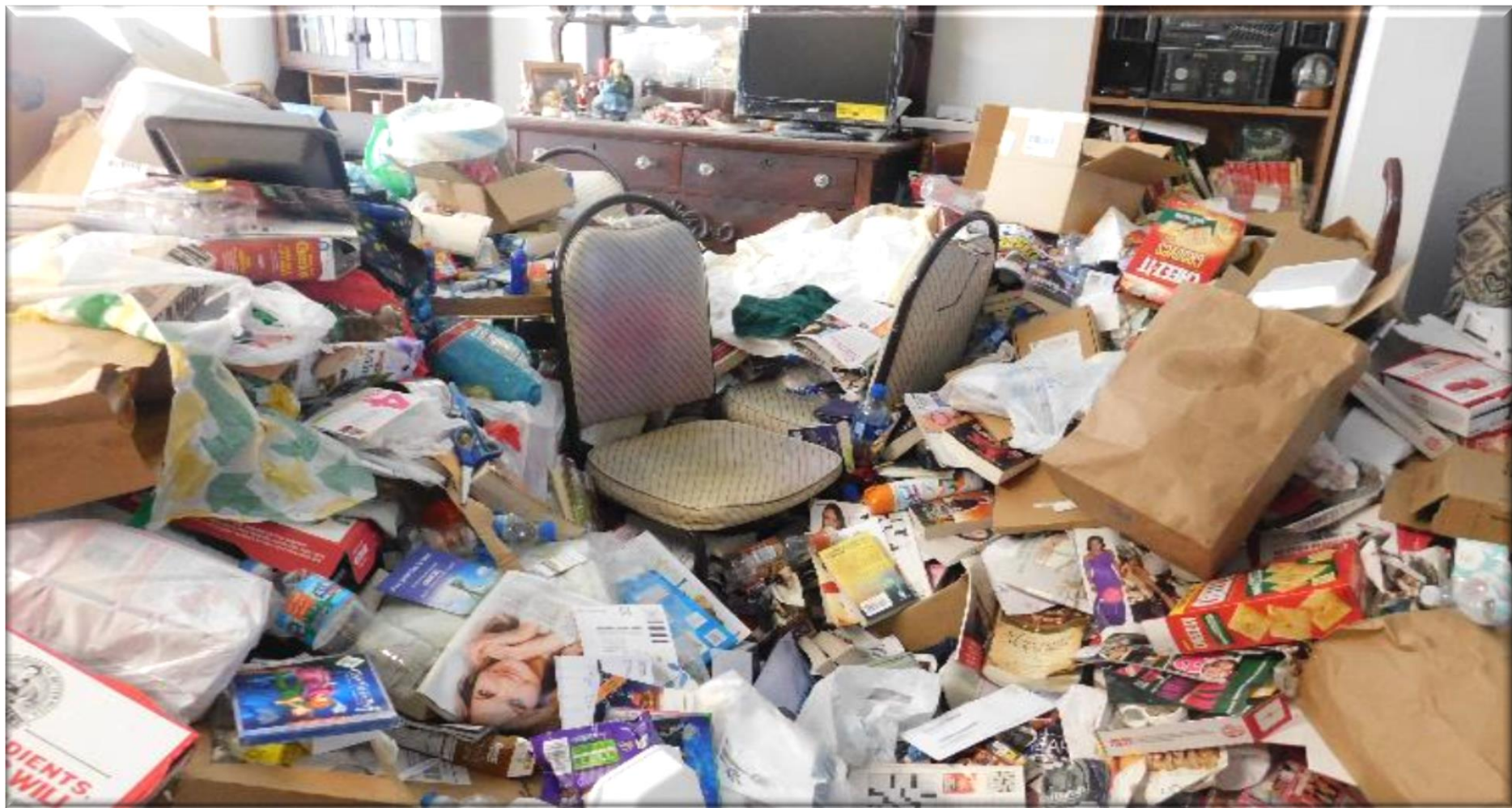


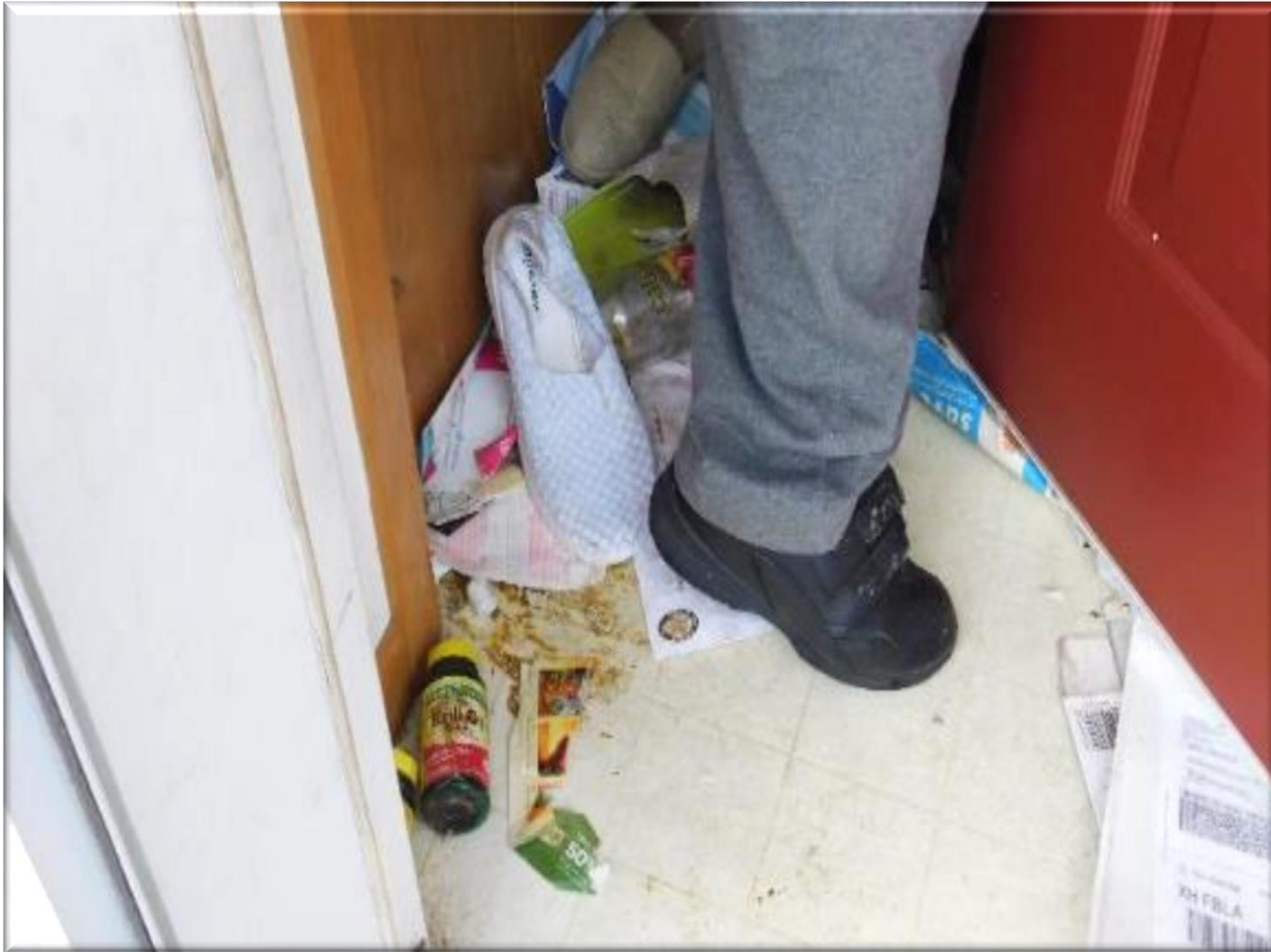
Significance

- Referral from Adult Protection- reporter was a family member
- Repeat case
- Two sisters living in the home, one a possible vulnerable adult
- Clean out in 2013 (forced clean out) \$2,500
- 2nd clean out 2018 (voluntary) \$6,000

2013 first inspection vs. 2018 first inspection











CLUTTER—HOARDING SCALE | Quick Reference Guide

	STRUCTURE AND ZONING	ANIMALS AND PETS	HOUSEHOLD FUNCTIONS	HEALTH AND SAFETY
LEVEL 1	All doors, stairs and windows are accessible; plumbing, electric and HVAC operational; fire and CO detectors installed and functional	Normal animal control; no evidence of rodents or insects	No excessive clutter; household appliances functional; house well maintained	Safe, sanitary, no odors; medication controlled
LEVEL 2	1 major exit blocked; 1 major appliance or HVAC device not working for longer than one season; some plumbing or electrical systems not fully functional; fire or CO detectors not-functional/non-existent	Evidence of inappropriate animal control; visible or odorous pet waste; light to medium evidence of common pests/insects	Clutter obstructs some living areas; slight congestion of exits, entrances, hallways, stairs; some household appliances not functional; inconsistent household maintenance/cleaning	Diminished sanitation; odors from dirty dishes, food, laundry, toilets; mildew present; medication control questionable
LEVEL 3	Outside clutter of items normally stored indoors; HVAC devices not working for longer than one season; fire or CO detectors not-functional/non-existent; light structural damage to home lasting < 6 months	Animal population exceeds local regulations; inadequate sanitation; medium level of spiders and webs; pests audible; light insect infestation	Clutter obstructing functions of key living areas, exits, entrances, hallways, stairs; inappropriate usage of household appliances/extension cords; substandard household maintenance/cleaning; hazardous substances in small quantities	Limited evidence of maintaining sanitation (heavily soiled food prep areas, dirty dishes, mildew); obvious odors; garbage cans not used/overflowing; dirty laundry; hazardous control of Rx/OTC meds
LEVEL 4	Excessive outdoor clutter of items normally stored indoors; HVAC devices not working for longer than one season; fire or CO detectors not-functional/non-existent; structural damage to home lasting > 6 months; water damaged floors, walls, foundation; broken windows; sewer backup	Animal population exceeds local regulations; inadequate sanitation; excessive spiders and webs; pests audible and visible; medium insect infestation	Diminished use and accessibility to key living areas; Several rooms, exits, entrances, hallways, stairs cluttered to extent they cannot be used for intended purposes; inappropriate storage of hazardous substances; improper use of electric space heaters, fans, extension cords	Rotting food; organic contamination; expired, leaking cans/bottles; dishes/utensils unusable; no linens on beds; sleeping on mattress, chair or floor; infestation of bedding/furniture; Rx/OTC meds easily accessible to anyone
LEVEL 5	Extreme indoor/outdoor clutter; foliage overgrowth; abandoned machinery; ventilation inadequate or nonexistent; HVAC systems not working; water damaged floors, walls, foundation; broken windows, doors, plumbing; unreliable water, septic systems; sewer backup	Animals at risk and dangerous to people due to behavior, health and numbers; pervasive spiders, rodents, bats, snakes, etc.; heavy infestation of insects, cockroaches, ants, etc.	Key living spaces not usable; all rooms not used for intended purposes; entrances, exits, hallways, stairs blocked; toilets, sinks and tubs not functioning; appliances unusable; hazardous and primitive use of kerosene, lanterns, candles, fireplace, wood stove as primary source of heat or light	Human urine and feces present; rotting food; cans/jars expired, leaking; dishes/utensils buried or nonexistent; beds inaccessible due to clutter or infestation; pervasive mold/mildew; moisture or standing water; Rx/OTC medications easily accessible and expired

CLUTTER—HOARDING SCALE | Quick Reference Guide

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Findings

- Determination is not made on site
- Review with Public Health nuisance team
- Write letters according to determination and send to property owner
- PH manager signs off on letters, Health and Human Services Director and assistant County Attorney are sent a copy of the letter.

RE: Carver County Public Health: First Order to Abate a Public Health Nuisance at

Pursuant to authority granted to the Carver County Public Health Department under M.S. 145A.04, Subd. 8, and Carver County Code of Ordinances Chapter 55, be advised that an inspection was conducted on December 10, 2018 by the Carver County Public Health Department. It has been determined that a Public Health Nuisance exists at the above referenced location.

Specifically, the Department has identified the following conditions:

1. Lack of egress throughout the home due to accumulation of personal belongings in the home including living room, kitchen, bathroom, bedrooms and garage.
2. Presence of urine and feces soaked pads.
3. Carpet was heavily soiled and possibly unsanitary.
4. Rotten/spoiled food in refrigerator and counters.
5. Unsanitary surfaces within the home.

This is an official notice to [REDACTED] (owners) of the property to remove or abate the threat to the public's health as soon as possible. By December 20, 2018 please select a company that you will hire to abate the public health nuisance. Carver County Public Health has worked with the following companies, Surface Surgeons; 612-990-5747 and Service Master 844-319-5401, however you are welcome to use any service you choose. Carver County Public Health will be in touch by phone on December 20 to get the name of the company you have selected and the date that the company will come out for the clean-up.

If by that date, you have not selected a provider the County will take the steps necessary to abate and will assess the costs to the owner as provided in M.S. 145.A08, Subd. 2 and Carver County Code of Ordinance Chapter 55. Any person in violation of any provision of Chapter 55 shall be guilty of a misdemeanor per section 55.14 of the ordinance.



Abatement

- Serve abatement notice to property owner and occupant regarding inspection outcome
- Re-inspection
 - Re-inspect property after 10 working days
 - Work with property owner to determine additional re-inspection dates
 - Re-inspections are completed until nuisance is abated or next course of action is pursued

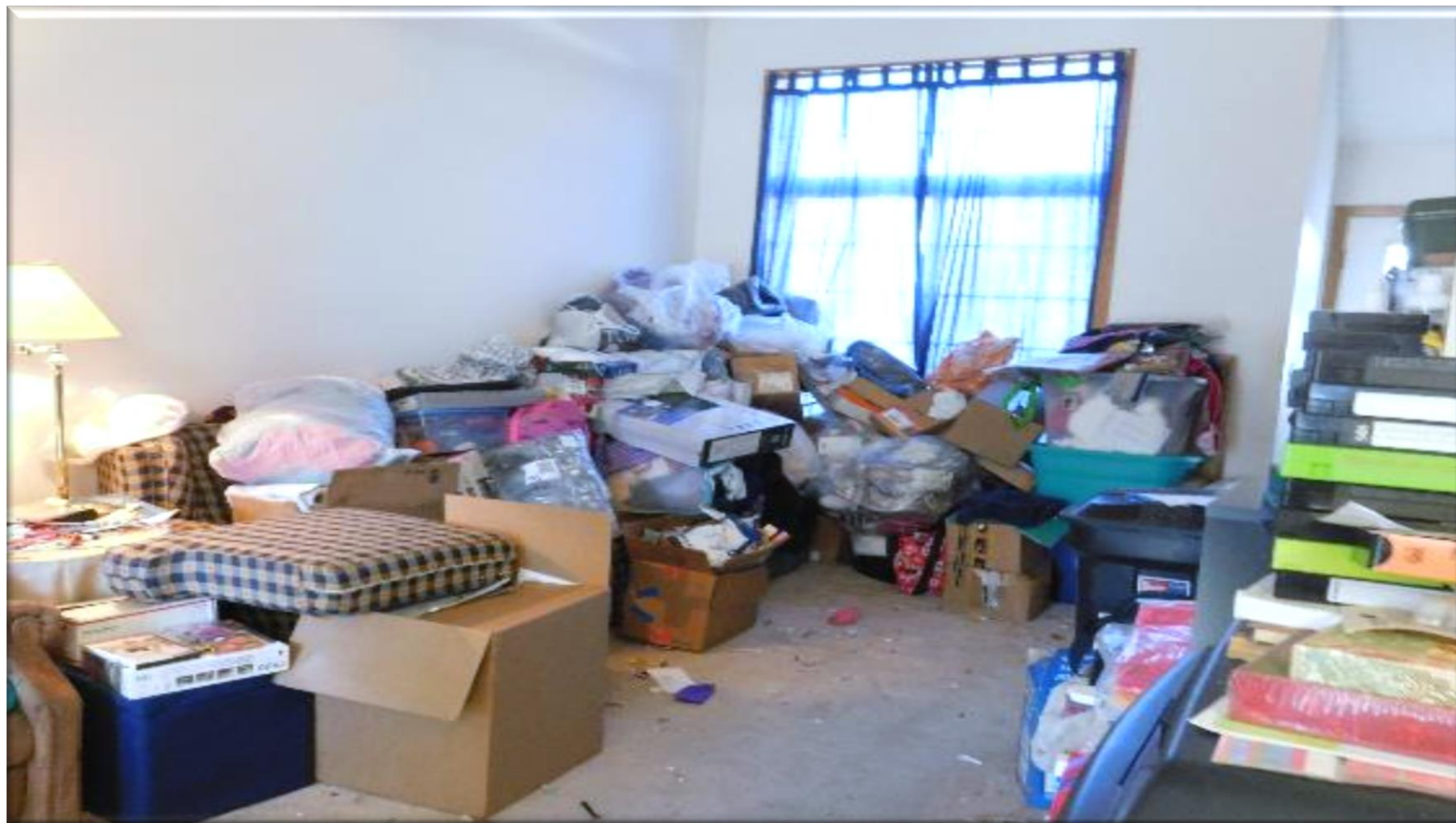
Forced Abatement

- When a public health nuisance cannot or will not be fully abated by the owner, the nuisance team, along with the Community Health and Promotion Supervisor, will discuss use of an forced abatement to resolve the public health nuisance.
- Abatement contractor = ServiceMaster

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Lessons learned

- VA was ruled out
 - Clean out was enough to abate the nuisance, but living conditions were still a concern
 - Partnered with Human Services group to look for a comprehensive solution - none was found
 - Sisters are resistant to services
 - Can we request the clean out of a vehicle?



CASE STUDY

Dawn Plumer– Carver County Public Health

Tami LaGow- Carver County Public Health

Victoria Law Enforcement – Sheriff's Office

Landlord





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Lessons Learned

- Awareness of your surrounding – If one team member calls it you are out
- Being creative with communication
- Fairly straight forward case
- First inspection was January 12 case closed January 19 – second inspection.

What is not a public health nuisance?

- Public nuisance
- Clutter
- General poor housekeeping
- Mold



Public health nuisance vs public nuisance

Public Health Nuisance

- Unsafe living situations that affect children, vulnerable adults and animals
- Rotting garbage or dead animals
- Insect/rodent infestations
- Hoarding, including animal hoarding
- Evidence of meth lab or other drug manufacturing

Public Nuisance

- Excessive noise
- Open wells
- Animal control issues
- Long grass
- Leaking roof in rental property
- Debris in yard
- Abandoned vehicles

Public health nuisance vs public nuisance

- A public health nuisance can...
 1. Make people sick,
 2. Cause an infestation of insects or rodents, and/or
 3. Pose a health threat/injury to others who may enter the building.
- A public nuisance consists of non-health related conditions; it is an activity that unreasonably interferes or obstructs a right that is conferred to the general public

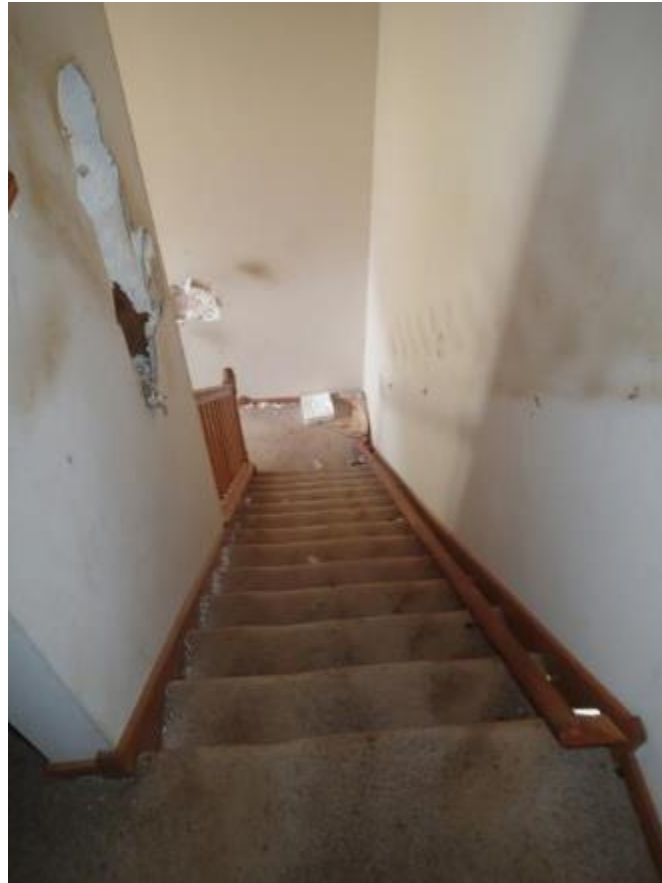
Is the room able to be used for its indented purpose? If not, that is a concern.



**Inspections where:
No nuisance was found...**













Remember...

- PHnu are complex and will likely involve a variety of agencies
- Might be a PHnu if:
 - Can make people sick
 - Cause infestation of insects and/or rodents
 - Can pose a health threat/injury to others who may enter property

Remember...

- Safety is TOP priority
- Focus on the public health nuisance
- If it's outside of your scope – ask others!
- Coordinate with other agencies EARLY on in process



In Closing

- **Challenges/Learning /Growth Opportunities:**
 - Apartment/manufactured home investigations are complex investigations – family/neighbors
 - Administrative search warrants
 - Repeat investigations
 - Nuisance vs. Clutter
 - County role

