#### S.O.P. #: 200-03

#### SUBJECT: CIVIL CITATIONS

#### DIVISION: INVESTIGATIVE SERVICES/FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

Objective: To outline the procedures to be followed by authorized personnel when issuing civil citations.

Purpose: A citation is a charging document and must be accurately completed. Remember that when you use a civil citation, you are charging a person with a civil offense that is a violation of a County ordinance. If the charging document is technically flawed and the defendant chooses to go to trial, the court will dismiss the case possibly with an embarrassing reprimand from the court. It is not only embarrassing to lose a case on a technicality, it also causes the court to view the department's citation program with less credibility. The civil citation process should be the last resort utilized to gain compliance from a property or business owner.

Note:Refer to the sample citation form in Appendix D for the following information.The line numbers referenced below correspond to the numbers in the left margin of Appendix D.

I. <u>The Plaintiff</u> (line 4)

The Baltimore County Fire Department is the plaintiff. You will fill in *line 4* of the citation by writing Baltimore County (on the line over County /Municipality /State) and Fire Department (on the line over Agency)

II. <u>The Defendant</u> (lines 6 - 14)

A business or property can be owned by any one of the following:

- A Corporation (e.g. Acme, Inc.)
- An Individual an individual who owns a business is known as a sole proprietor
- A Partnership General Partnership (e.g. Lawyers R Us Law Partners) Limited Partnership (e.g. XYZ Real-estate, Ltd.)
- A Joint Venture (e.g. Timeshare condo., J.V.)
- A. <u>Citing a Corporation or L.L.C.</u>

A corporation is recognized under the laws of the state as a person. If a business or property is owned by a corporation, you may charge that corporation for violations the same as you would cite an individual. **If you wish to cite the business or property owner and that owner is a corporation, you must <u>not</u> name a <b>manager or any other individual as the defendant** on the citation. You must **name the corporation** and you must use the <u>exact</u> name of the corporation on *line 6* as it is listed on the corporate charter. You may, if you choose, cite an individual that commits an act that is within their control that is a violation of the fire code (e.g. a manager decides to chain a panic bar closed and refuses to remove the chain). If you do this, you are not involving the corporation and the individual becomes personally responsible for the act for which they have been charged.

There are individuals within a corporation who are empowered to accept legal documents for the corporation. These are the individuals who must sign for and accept the citation on *line 32* in order for the court to consider the citation properly served. The following is a list of individuals that can accept citations for a corporation.

- 1. Resident Agent
- 2. Corporate Officer
  - CEO
    - President
    - Vice-president
    - Treasurer

#### 3. Manager

The list appears from most acceptable to least acceptable with the resident agent being most acceptable. The resident agent is an individual or another corporation that is legally designated to accept legal documents for the corporation.

You must make a diligent attempt to serve the resident agent either in person or by mail. If this is not possible for some reason (e.g.; no resident agent listed), you may serve the next person down the list. However, you must be able to explain why and what effort you made to find the agent to the court. In order to determine who is the resident agent, corporate officers, the trade name of the corporation, or any other public information about the corporation you can phone the Maryland Department of Assessment and Taxation Corporate Charter Division at (410) 767-1340 and use their automated information system or go online to <u>http://sdatcert3.resiusa.org/ucc-charter</u>, click the Business Information Entity link and enter as much of the corporation name as you know.

#### B. Citing an Individual, Partnership, or Joint Venture

1. Individual (Sole Proprietor)

When citing an individual it is imperative that you use the person's proper full name as the defendant on *line 6*. The individual who is the defendant is **the only one who can sign for the citation** on *line 33*. Signing for a citation is not an admission of guilt. The signature only indicates that the individual has been properly served with the citation. An individual may be served with a citation either in person or by registered mail using the procedure outlined in this SOP. When citing an individual, you must fill in the complete address and descriptive information on *lines 8 - 12* for the defendant listed on the citation form. The address is the residence of the defendant and may not be the address where the violation occurred.

2. Partnerships and Joint Ventures

Partnerships, either general or limited, unlike a corporation, are <u>not</u> recognized as a person. The partners are individually and personally responsible for any violation that the partnership commits. You must cite a partner the same as you would cite an individual (sole proprietor) outlined in the previous section. <u>Do not use the name of the partnership</u> as the defendant on *line 6*. Use the name of the partner that is being cited. The partner named as the defendant is the person who must also sign the citation on *line 31*. The general or managing partner(s) is the person or persons who you will be citing. Since you can only cite one individual on each citation form, it will be necessary to write a separate citation to each partner if you wish to cite all partners in the business. You will usually not have contact with limited partners since they are "silent" partners who do not participate in the operation of the business.

A joint venture is a type of partnership that is formed for a single purpose (e.g.; a development group that buys and renovates a high rise condo building with the goal of selling condo units. Once the units are sold, the joint venture is dissolved.) A joint venture is treated the same as a partnership with

regard to civil citations. All individuals in a joint venture are individually liable for the actions of the business. A joint venture has no "silent partners".

III. <u>Related Citations</u> (line 16)

If several citations are written for the same business, or several partners or joint venturers are cited for the same violation, the citation control numbers (found on far right side on *line 2*) for those citations should be written on *line 16*. This will allow the court to group the related cases together to be tried on the same day. The daytime and nighttime phone numbers of the defendant are also written on *line 16*.

- IV. Specifying Charges (lines 18 28)
  - A. When and Where (lines 18 21)

Write the date that you actually witnessed the violation on *line 18*. Use the date format shown in the example in Appendix D. The time of the violation (*line 19*) is written in standard a.m./p.m. format not military time. The location where the violation occurred is written on *lines 19 and 21*.

B. <u>Description of Violation</u> (lines 22 - 26)

Describe in plain English what the defendant did or failed to do that resulted in a violation. Be as accurate as possible.

- C. <u>Citing the Code Section Violated</u> (*lines 26-28*)
  - 1. Type of Code Violation (*line 26*)

You must specify which code is being cited on *line 26*. If the owner is being cited for excessive false alarms you will check the box for Md. Ann. Code since this is a statutory violation (state law). For all other County Code and County Fire Code violations you will check the box for Municipal Ordinance/Public Local Law/Local code. The violation of the State Fire Code is a COMAR violation but we cannot cite state fire code violations with a civil citation so the COMAR box will not be used.

2. Code Section Violated (*line 28*)

There are two basic types of code violations that can be cited with a citation:

- Baltimore County Code
- Annotated Code of Maryland

Baltimore County Fire Code Violations are actually County Code violations since the County Fire Code is adopted into law as part of the Baltimore County Code. This includes violations of the NFPA 1 Fire Prevention Code; Life Safety Code, and NFPA standards that are adopted by reference in those documents and under the Fire Code. There are other sections of the Baltimore County Code that may be cited in addition to the Fire Code that are enforced by the Fire Department. These include the one, two, and three family rental smoke detector ordinance and the ordinance that requires smoke detectors on every level of family and group day care homes.

Annotated Code of Maryland violations are statutory. The only Annotated Code violations that we deal with that can be cited on a citation are excessive false alarms. This is because the Annotated Code section which covers this violation specifies that the penalty is a civil penalty of \$30.00 which may be cited on a civil citation by either a law enforcement or fire official.

a)	To Cite Baltimore County Fire Code Violations
	" BALTO. CO. CODE, ART 14, SEC. 14-2-102"
	and the specific section of the FIRE CODE that was violated,
	e.g.; illegal use of a Bar-B-Q grill would be:
" BA	LTO. CO. CODE, ART 14, SEC. 14-2-102, BILL 8-05, Sec. 5, 1:10.11.7"
b)	To Cite Life Safety Code Violations
0)	" BALTO. CO. CODE, ART 14, SEC. 14-2-102, BILL 8-05"
	and the specific section of the LSC violated,
	e.g.; locked exit would be:
" BALTO	D. CO. CODE, ART 14, SEC. 14-2-102, BILL 8-05, NFPA 101 LSC, SEC. 7.2.1.5"
c)	To Cite NFPA 1 Code Violations
0)	" BALTO. CO. CODE, ART 14, SEC. 14-2-102, BILL 8-05"
	and the specific section of the NFPA 1 violated
	e.g.; damaged smoke door would be:
" BALI	O. CO. CODE, ART 14, SEC. 14-2-102, BILL 8-05, NFPA 1 Fire Code 12.9.4"
d)	To Cite Annotated Code Violations
_)	The only Annotated Code violation that may be cited with a civil citation is an automatic false
	alarm violation. This is because this violation is designated as a civil violation and not a criminal
	violation. Violations of Article 38A are misdemeanors (criminal violations) and must be cited
	using an application for a statement of criminal charges.
	TO CITE AUTOMATIC FALSE ALARM VIOLATIONS:
	"Criminal Law Article Sec. 9-609"
e)	To Cite County Code Violations Other Than the Fire Code
	"BALTO. CO. CODE (appropriate article and section number)
	e.g.; violation of the 1, 2 and 3 family rental smoke detector
	ordinance would be: "BALTO. CO. CODE, SEC. 14-2-201
	e.g.; violation of the family day care smoke detector ordinance would be:
	"BALTO. CO. CODE, SEC. 14-2-202"
You	nay refer to Appendix E for a list of code references of the most common violations. It is important
	nember that the code sections which are listed in Appendix E are for your reference only. This
	nce is provided merely to guide the user to the approximate section of the code document that is
	nced. It will be necessary for the user to use these referenced sections as a starting point to look up
	act code section that will be cited. In most instances, the sections listed in Appendix E are not
	lete enough by themselves to enter on the citation. You must research the exact section to ctly cite the violation.
corre	cuy cue une violation.
	re to correctly reference the proper code section that was violated is probably the most common
	n for the court to dismiss a citation. In most instances the court will be unfamiliar with fire code
	tions. It will be necessary for you to make three photo copies of all sections of the code that are
	One copy is for the court, one is for the county attorney, and one is for the defense attorney.
•	document that you need to present as evidence should be photo copied for the court, defendant
-	rosecutor. You must always keep the originals. The court will not return any original
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## V. <u>Service of the Citation</u> (*line 31*)

The court requires the defendant to be properly served with the citation. This means that the defendant must sign the citation on *line 31* as proof that they have received a copy of the charges. A signature is not an admission of

documents, including your inspection reports.

guilt. There are two instances where you may not be able to have the citation signed: 1) mailed citations, and 2) citations which the defendant refuses to sign.

#### A. <u>Mailed citations</u>

The court accepts the defendants signature on the registered mail receipt as proof of service. The following procedures will be used when mailing a citation.

#### 1. <u>Procedure for Mailing a Citation to a Corporate Agent</u>

When it is necessary to mail a citation to a resident agent for a corporation, the following procedures should be followed.

- a) Send the defendant's copy to headquarters with the name and address of the resident agent and a note stating that you would like to have the citation mailed <u>return receipt requested</u>.
- b) A form letter will be generated at headquarters with the appropriate information and mailed as a cover letter with the citation (See Appendix A for example). The control number on the upper right corner of the citation will be printed on the green return receipt (which is typed by the office staff) on the lower left corner of the "RETURN TO" side of the return receipt.
- c) When the receipt is returned to Headquarters, it will be sent to the ADO who will send a copy to the citing Fire Marshal along with a copy of the cover letter and citation. The original will be kept in the Citation File at Headquarters. If the case goes to trial, you will need to pick up the original receipt from Headquarters before the trial so that you can present it as evidence to the court that the citation was properly served.
- 2. <u>Procedure for Mailing a Citation to a Business or Property Owner</u> (Sole Proprietor or Partner)

When it is necessary to mail a citation to a business owner or property owner who is a sole proprietor or partner (as opposed to a corporation), the following procedure should be followed.

- a) Fill out the citation and include a description and the <u>exact full name</u> of the defendant. The description is important because there have been cases when the defendant does not appear in court when required, and the sheriff needs this information if the judge issues a bench warrant. Send the defendant's copy to headquarters with the exact name and mailing address of the individual that you are citing and a note stating that you would like to have the citation mailed <u>to that person</u>, return receipt requested. Be sure to specify that the person being cited is the one that you want to sign the receipt since the court accepts the signature on the green mail receipt the same as the signature on the citation.
- b) A form letter will be generated at headquarters with the appropriate information and mailed as a cover letter with the citation (see Appendix B for example). The control number on the upper right corner of the citation will be printed on the green return receipt (which is typed by the office staff) on the lower left corner of the "RETURN TO" side of the return receipt.
- c) When the receipt is returned to Headquarters, it will be sent to the ADO who will send a copy to the citing Fire Marshal along with a copy of the cover letter and citation. The original will be kept in the Citation File at Headquarters. If the case goes to trial, you will need to pick up the original receipt from Headquarters before the trial so that you can present it as evidence to the court that the citation was properly served.

#### B. <u>Defendant Refuses to Sign</u>

If a defendant becomes argumentative and refuses to sign for receipt of the citation you must have a witness (another fire marshal, police officer or county official) that can testify to the fact that the defendant was given a copy of the citation and that the defendant refused to sign. Write on the citation on the signature line, *line 31*, "refusal to sign witnessed by [name of your witness]." Obtain information from your witness (contact phone number, work address, etc.) and attach the information to your citation for your records. It will be necessary for the witness to testify in court if a trial is heard.

VI. Fine and Trial Information and Request to Abate Violations (lines 38-44)

#### A. <u>Fine Payment Information</u>

Except for false alarm violations which are set at \$30 under state law, the amount of the fine is set in the County Code as follows:

First Violation - \$250,

Repeat of violation (2<sup>nd</sup> violation of same requirement) - \$500,

Third and each subsequent repeated violation - \$1,000.

Write the fine on *line 38*. On the same line write the date that the fine is due. The fine will be due <u>20</u> <u>calendar days from the day that the citation is served</u>. Notify the defendant of the location of the county agency where the fines are paid by writing on *line 39* "Dept. of Budget and Finance, 400 Washington Ave., <u>Towson 21204</u>".

#### B. <u>Trial Request Information</u>

The defendant may request to stand trial by sending a written request to the "<u>Director of Budget & Finance</u>, <u>400 Washington Ave.</u>, <u>Towson 21204</u>". Enter this information on *line 42*. If the defendant neither pays the fine nor requests a trial, the county will double the fine and send a late notice. If the fine is not paid the county will request the court to set a trial date.

## C. <u>Request to Abate Violation</u>

In addition to any fine that is imposed by the court, we will request the court to order the defendant to abate any violation that still exists. This request is made by checking the box on *line 44* and writing "<u>Baltimore County</u>" in the blank.

#### VII. Fire Marshal's Information (lines 60-62)

Sign your name and title and write the date on *line 60*. On *line 61* write in "<u>Balto. Co. Fire Dept.</u>" next to agency and "<u>Fire Marshal</u>" next to sub- agency. The ID number that will be used is the departmental ID number that is issued to all personnel. Fill in <u>your office</u> phone number including the area code. At the bottom of the citation, *line* 62, write in the address of headquarters. There is no space where the address information is requested, but the Clerk of the Court has requested that we write this information so that they will know where to send any notice of trial schedule.

#### VIII. Distribution of Copies

#### A. <u>White and Green Copy</u>

These copies are kept together and sent to headquarters to the ADO. The ADO will send these to the Department of Budget and Finance where they are held until either the fine is paid or a trial is requested.

B. <u>Yellow Copy</u>

This is the defendant's copy which will be left with the defendant or sent to headquarters for mailing according to the procedures outlined in this SOP.

C. <u>Pink Copy</u>

This is Headquarters' file copy which will be kept by the ADO. Send this along with the white and yellow copy to Headquarters.

D. Gold Copy

This is your copy. Do not remove it from the citation book. This copy will always stay in your citation book.

#### IX. Voiding a Citation

If you make an error you may void the citation. To do this, you must write the word V O I D in large letters across the citation. The white, green, pink and yellow copies will be stapled together and forwarded to the ADO at Headquarters where they will be kept in the file. Keep the gold copy in your citation book.

X. <u>Requesting a New Citation Book</u>

When a citation book is completely used, it will be returned to the Administrative Captain for replacement. <u>All gold copies must be returned with the used book</u> since a citation is a charging court document and all citation control numbers whether issued or voided must be accounted for. The Captain will record the beginning and ending numbers of the used book in the citation book file and the beginning and ending control numbers of the new book which will be issued as a replacement. You will verify the numbers and sign for the book.

#### XI. Loss of a Citation Book

A citation is a legal charging document. Every effort will be made to prevent the loss of citation books. If a book is lost, it must immediately be reported to your supervisor who will report it to the Division Chief of Investigative Services. A written report will be forwarded through the chain of command to the Support Services Division Chief detailing when the book was found to be missing and the steps taken to find it.

# **APPENDIX A**

(<u>date</u>)

(*name of corporate resident agent*) (*address of agent*) (*city, state zip*)

Re: Service of Civil Citation

To: Resident Agent for (*name of corporation*), Inc.

The above listed corporation has been cited for violation(s) of the Baltimore County Fire Code for the occupancy which is located at (*address where violation occurred*).

You are listed as the resident agent for the corporation and, as such, you are being served with the enclosed civil citation.

If you have any questions regarding this matter you may contact me at (*phone number*), or Fire Marshal (*name*) at (*phone number*).

Sincerely,

Administrative Captain Office of the Fire Marshal

cc: File

# APPENDIX B

(date)

(business owner's name) (owner's mailing address) (city, state zip)

Re: Service of Civil Citation

Dear (*owner's name*):

You are listed as an owner of the business or property located at (*location where violation occurred*). As the result of a fire inspection conducted at the above business or property, violations of the Baltimore County Fire Code were found. You have failed to correct the violations after written notice was given to you.

In accordance with Section 14-2-103 of the Baltimore County Code you are being served with the enclosed civil citation for failure to correct this violation.

If you have any questions regarding this matter you may contact Fire Marshal (name) at (phone number).

Sincerely,

Administrative Captain Office of the Fire Marshal

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Signature Lt. Joe Smith	Date: 11/01/01
Agency Balto. Co. Fire Dept. Sub-Agency Fire Marshal I.D. No. 0022	Phone 410~887~5178
700 E. Joppa Rd. 21286	

# APPENDIX E

VIOLATION	SECTION	FINE
EXITING LOCKED/BLOCKED INADEQUATE SEPARATION	LSC 7-1.10/NFPA1 14.4.1 LSC 7.1.3.2	\$250.00 1 <sup>st</sup> offense
INADEQUATE EXITING IMPROPER ARRANGEMENT	LSC 7.4 LSC 7.5;7.6;7.7	\$500.00 2 <sup>nd</sup> offense
LIGHTING		\$1,000 3 <sup>rd</sup> and all subsequent offenses
INADEQUATE EXIT ILLUMINATION INADEQUATE EMERGENCY LIGHTING IMPROPER EXIT MARKING	LSC 7.8 LSC 7.9 LSC 7.10	
WARNING EQUIPMENT SMOKE DET. VIOLATION 1-3 FAM. RENTAL FAILURE TO MAINTAIN ALARM SYSTEM	Art 14, SEC 14-2-201 Bo. Co. Code	۱ ۱
IMPROPER STORAGE	NFFA I IS./.I.I	,
FLAMMABLE/COMBUSTIBLE LIQUIDS INADEQUATE CLEARANCE ACCUMULATION OF WASTE OUTDOOR STORAGE	NFPA 1 66.1 Fire Code Sec. 5, 1 :10.22 NFPA 1 19.1 NFPA 1 10.17	1 1 1 1
WATER SUPPLY OBSTRUCTED HYDRANT OBSDTRUCTED FDC PRIVATE HYDRANT MALFUNCTION INADEQUATE/OBSTRUCTED SUPPLY STANDPIPE NOT MAINTAINED		N N N N
SUPPRESSION EQUIPMENT SPRINKLER SYS. NOT MAINTAINED HOOD SUPPRESSION SYS. NOT MAINTAINED HOOD SYSTEM NOT CLEANED OTHER SYSTEMS (HALON,CO2,ETC)	NFPA 1 13.3.1.1 NFPA 1 50.5.2 NFPA 1 50.5.4	v v v v
NOT MAINTAINED EXTINGUISHER NOT MAINTAINED	NFPA 1 13.8 NFPA 1 13.6.6.8.3	N N N
GENERAL HAZARDS ILLEGAL OPEN BURNINING MAINTAINING A HAZARD ILLEGAL USE OF A BAR-B-Q GRILL OVERCROWDING ILLEGAL USE OF KEROSENE HEATER BLOCKING A FIRE LANE	Fire code Sec. 5, 1 :10.11.1 NFPA 1 1-13.3 Fire code Sec. 5, 1 :10.11.7 Fire code Sec. 5, 1:20.1.4.8.3.1.1 Fire code Sec 5, 6-5.2.4 NFPA 1 18.2.3	N N N N
BUILDING FEATURES INADEQUATE FIRE SEPARATION INADEQUATE INTERIOR FINISH INOPERATIVE FIRE/SMOKE DOOR VACANT BUILDING NOT SECURED	LSC 8.2 LSC 10.2 NFPA 1 12.7.3 NFPA 1 10.14	v v v v

# APPENDIX E

VIOLATION	SECTION	FINE
MISC. VIOLATIONS NOT LISTED ABOVE	USE APPROPRIATE CODE	v
FAILURE TO OBTAIN A PERMIT OR FIRE SAFETY INSPECTION CERTIFICATE	FIRE CODE 1:1.12.1.1	١
FALSE ALARM ACTIVATION	Criminal Law Art. Sec 9-609 MD. ANNOTATED CODE	\$30.00

\*\*\* The above code references are intended to only assist in finding the proper code document and section. **Do not** cite these sections on a citation as they appear above. You must obtain the exact section from the text of the code document referenced.