

Guidance for the Temporary Occupancy of Damaged Buildings

Liability Disclaimer

This guidance is intended for basic, household-level visual checks only. It does not constitute structural or safety certification and cannot guarantee a building is safe to enter or occupy. Conditions may change suddenly and without warning.

A full damage assessment by qualified professionals is required to verify structural stability.

If any sign of serious danger is present, do not enter and seek qualified professional assistance if available.

This guidance is developed by:



GAZA Shelter Response - September 2025

A. Before using any house or property

- ☐ **Ask for permission from the owner**
Written permission, or a verbal agreement.
- ☐ **Assess the damage, as best you can**
Carefully assess the safety of your home.



B. Outside Check

1. **Walk around the building** (if possible)
2. **Look for major structural issues.**
3. **Check adjacent buildings** that could pose a hazard if they collapse onto your structure.

DO NOT ENTER IF YOU SEE:



Parts of the building collapsed or leaning



Deep cracks in exterior walls



Leaning or bulging walls



Loose & large pieces at risk of falling.

Burnt buildings are...DANGEROUS...

even if they are still standing.
Due to: Collapsing debris, hazardous materials, structural damage



Note: This tool offers basic guidance only and is not a substitute for expert structural assessment. *(Partners to insert hotline or contact information)*

Initial Visual Inspection



Do not touch unidentified objects, they may be unexploded ordnance, and ensure your family, including children, are warned not to approach or handle them.

✓ Contact Civil Defence to inform of the unexploded ordnance.

C. Inside Check

If the exterior seems sound:



- ☐ Enter the building **during daylight**.
- ☐ **Wear sensible clothing**, or proper protective clothing if available. **Cover your mouth and nose** before entering.
- ☐ **Check stability with your foot** before fully standing in a specific area.
- ☐ **Always enter with someone else**
!! BUT NOT CHILDREN !!
- ☐ **BE CAREFUL** of any exposed electrical cables or damaged appliances.
- ☐ **LISTEN** for unusual noises such as creaking, cracking, popping.
- ☐ Check for signs of **water infiltration** or **soil erosion** around the base or foundations

1. Check slab & beam

Consider the whole building, not just the rooms you want to occupy.

2. Inspect walls in each room

Especially at corners of doors or windows



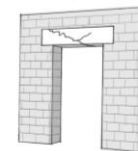
☐ Wall to slab cracks



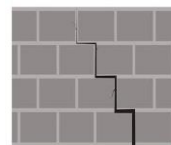
☐ Diagonal Cracks



☐ Floor and slab cracks



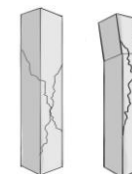
☐ Cracked Lintel



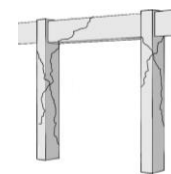
☐ Stairstep crack in brick or masonry



☐ Bowed wall

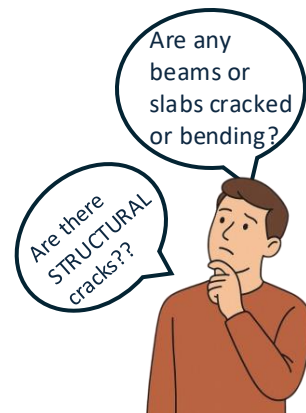


☐ Cracked or shifted column



☐ Column to beam cracks

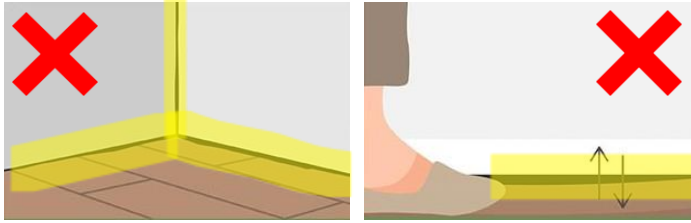
Carefully inspect the slabs, columns, beams, and walls. Do not occupy the space unless you are certain it is structurally safe.



3. Check floors & roof



- ☐ Floor and wall gaps
- ☐ Sagging floors



They could collapse or crumble further if stepped on.
Proceed only if you are confident that it is safe.

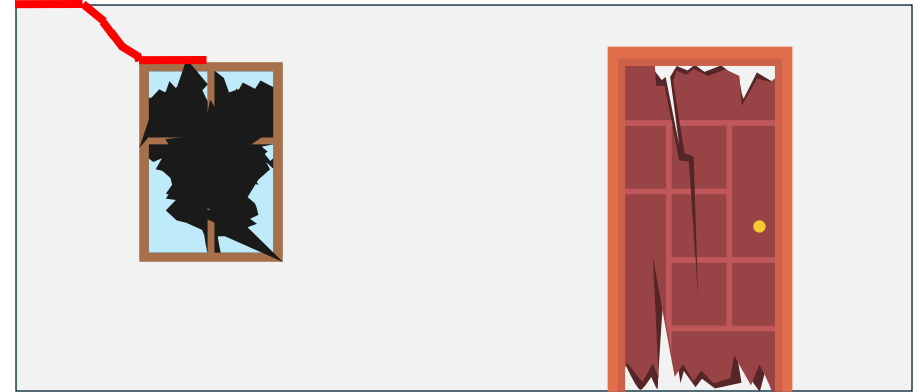
4. Check stairs



- ☐ Loose or broken steps.
- ☐ Cracks in the stair structure or supports.
- ☐ Signs of shifting or tilting.

Clear debris carefully, as they may pose a tripping hazard.
Avoid stairs lead to upper floors of the building with visible damage

5. Check doors & windows



- ☐ Cracked or shattered glass or wood.
- ☐ Loose or hanging frames.
- ☐ Difficulty opening or closing.
- ☐ Sharp edges or debris around openings.
- ☐ Signs of structural damage around the window area

Badly fitting doors (e.g. a door that jams or doesn't fit its frame) can be a **sign the building has shifted**.



Expanded Sealing Off Materials

These materials are recommended for emergency repairs. Partners are encouraged to modify the quantities below based on the materials and resources available to them.

Essential Components

TIMBER BATTEN 20 pcs

5x2.5cm, useful for creating dividing partitions, fixing tarpaulin and sheet to walls. 2.4m lengths.



TARPAULINS 3 pcs

woven plastic, available in sizes of 6x4 meters, 5x4 meters, or as a roll of 4 meters width. They can be used for roofing, walls and covering openings/windows



PLASTIC SHEET 1 roll

0.3mm thick, roll is up to 50sqm per shelter. Minimum width 4m.



NAILS 50mm 0.5 kg

For timber connections. Used for making frames and fixing cover-battens.



NAILS 75 mm 0.5 kg

For timber connections. Used for making frames and fixing cover-battens.



Clout nails 40mm 0.25 kg

For timber connections. Used for making frames and fixing cover-battens.



HAND SAW 2 pcs

total length 60 cm, for wood, good quality, tempered, hardened and set teeth. Unbreakable handle.



MEASURING TAPE 1 pcs

3 meters, graduated in centimetres.



ROPE 1 roll

Minimum 30 meters length, in roll, 6mm thickness.



HAMMER 1 pcs

Metal or fiberglass handle.



Optional Components

TIMBER SHEET - 32 pcs PLYWOOD OR OSB

Approx. 1 cm thick, used for internal partitions, covering openings etc. 2.4x1.2 m.



METAL FIXING BAND 1 pcs

10m roll, 20mm width x 0.9 thick. Useful for general purpose fixing band.



SCALPEL 1 pcs

Precision cutting tool with replaceable blade. Used for fixing tarpaulins.



Sealing off openings



Wear gloves & carefully remove shattered glass



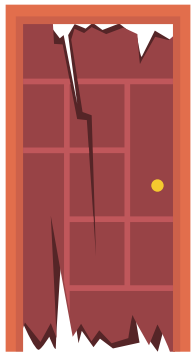
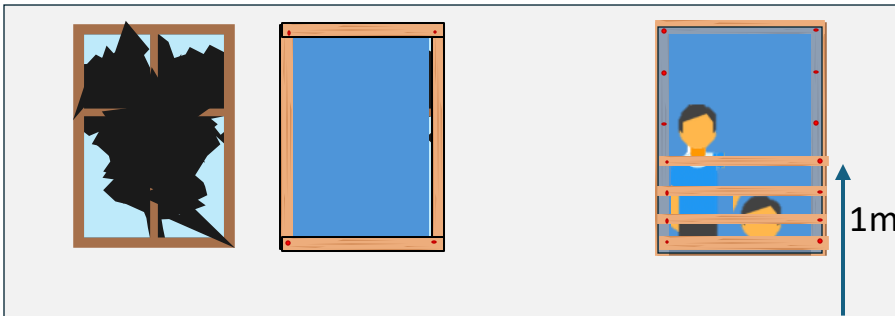
Keep children away from insecure windows

☐ Secure tarpaulin

Use timber & nails or ropes to tightly cover the opening.

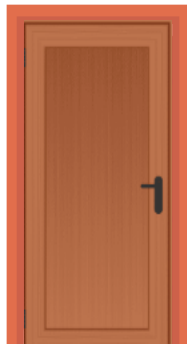
☐ Add barrier

Install a railing to prevent accidents



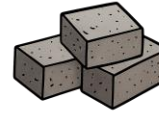
☐ Reuse old doors

Adjust them to fit the size of the openings



Sealing off large gaps or collapsed areas

☐ Rebuild with:



✓ Salvaged blocks

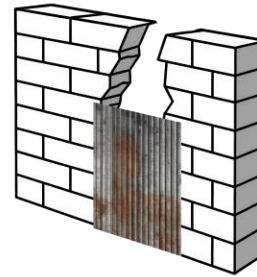


✓ Cement & sand

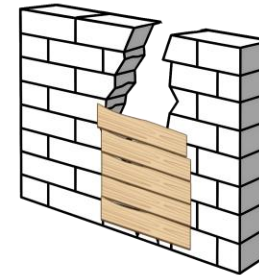


✓ Mud & straw

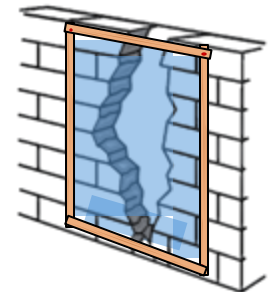
☐ If blocks are unavailable, use:



✓ CGI sheets



✓ Wooden boards



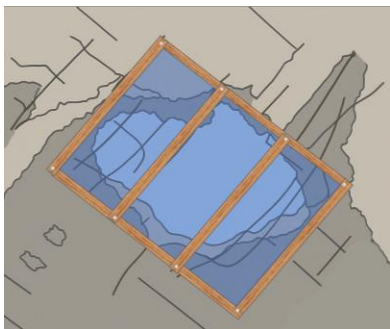
✓ Tightly secure fabric/tarpaulin

Sealing-off internal walls



☐ Use **fabric, tarps, old doors, or wood** to create privacy in damaged spaces.

Sealing off roofs

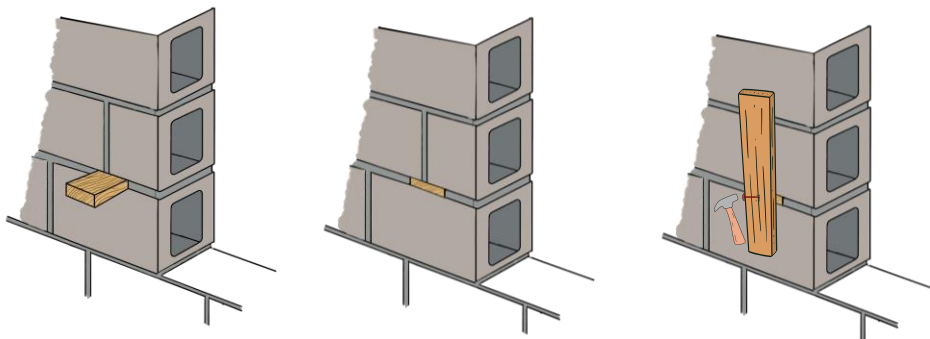


- ❑ Cover holes with **metal sheets** or **tarpaulin**.
- ❑ For large gaps, use **wooden beams** and secure tarps with **rope or wire**.

Tarps provide **shade**, **rain protection**, and **privacy**.

How to fix timber to blockwork?

If it is difficult to get a good fixing to blockwork, try using a **wooden wedge**.

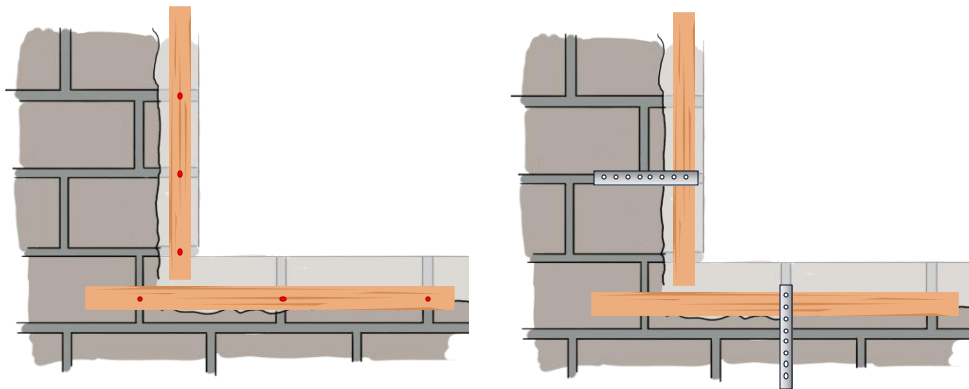


1. Hammer the wedge into a joint in the blocks

2. Cut it off flush

3. Nail the batten to the wedge

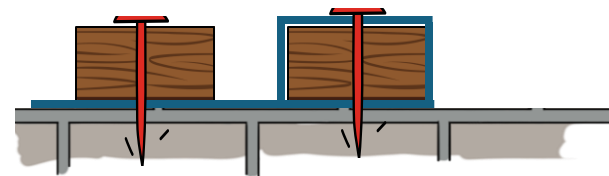
When fixing a timber batten to blockwork wall:



Try nailing into the mortar joints

Try using metal straps to get a good fixing

When fixing a tarpaulin to blockwork wall:



Use a timber batten

Wrap around a timber batten

This method can be also applied with **clout nails** or **scalpel**

Safe handling of Asbestos

Content adapted from



Recognising Asbestos



In **Gaza**, the most common asbestos is found in **roofing sheets**, mainly in refugee camps.

- ❑ **Corrugated cement-like panels with a wavy, corrugated profile**
- ❑ **Cloudy grey**, sometimes with rough, grainy, or speckled patches caused by aging cement and exposed fibers.

Health Risks

When asbestos-containing materials are disturbed, tiny fibres are released into the air.

If inhaled → **Serious health issues** such as cancer.



Asbestos should preferably be handled by experts due to associated health risks.

How to remove asbestos panels?



Protect your mouth and nose with a mask using a t-shirt or fabric across your mouth and nose.



Do not break it up into pieces. Avoid creating dust .



Put it in a plastic bag –and then put that plastic bag inside another plastic bag (double bagging). Seal with some tape if you have it.

When finished dispose the mask in the 2nd bag.

Disposal of Asbestos

Put the asbestos bags to one side for later collection.

COOKING AND LIGHTING – FIRE PREVENTION AND HEALTH RISKS

It's best to cook in **outdoor areas**, away from any flammable materials, to reduce the risk of fire.



If it's not possible and you have to cook inside the same area you're occupying, make sure to:

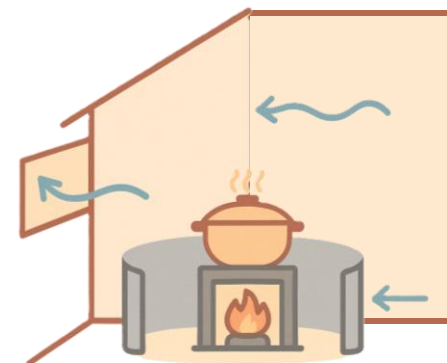


- ❑ Avoid an open flame



- ❑ Keep the flame enclosed in a stove or metal cage
- ❑ Raise the stove using bricks

- ❑ Don't let the stove unattended
- ❑ Use a metal/ clay barrier around the stove if available
- ❑ Keep distance between the walls and the stove
- ❑ Ensure ventilation while cooking
- ❑ Ensure the stove is turned off completely after use.



Keep in mind:



- ✓ Be aware of fire and health risks such as oil or kerosene lamps and candles.



- ✓ If candles are used, try to secure them in a non-combustible holders.



- ✓ Keep the fire away from any flammable materials and children.