

Authorities now have stronger powers to stop, evacuate, or demolish unsafe structures.

BY ELIZABETH KAMURUNGI

Any person whose negligence, commission, or omission causes an accident on a building or construction site resulting in injury or death will, upon conviction, face up to 12 years' imprisonment, a fine of Shs10 million, or both.

Additionally, developers who erect buildings without a permit from the responsible authorities will, if convicted, be liable to a fine of Shs40,000 per square metre built, imprisonment of up to five years, or both.

The tough penalties took effect yesterday after President Museveni assented to the Building Control Amendment Act. State House also announced that the President signed two other laws – the Mortgage Refinance Institutions Act, 2025, and the Valuation Act, 2025 – describing them as critical to Uganda's housing and construction sectors.

Under the Mortgage Refinance Institutions Act, 2025, the Bank of Uganda is empowered to regulate mortgage refinance institutions, a move aimed at strengthening oversight of the housing finance sector and improving access to long-term financing for homeowners.

The Valuation Act, 2025 provides for the establishment of the Institute of Certified Valuers to oversee professional standards, registration, and regulation of valuers in Uganda.

"The new laws introduce tougher penalties for illegal construction and non-compliance with approved building standards, a move expected to enhance safety and accountability in the country's rapidly expanding urban areas," State House said in a statement.

"The enactment of the three laws is



A rescue team searches for survivors after a building collapsed in Lukuli-Nanganda Village, Makindye Division in Kampala on May 10, 2020. PHOTO/FILE

Tougher building laws take effect after Museveni approval

expected to streamline construction oversight, deepen the mortgage market, and professionalise valuation services in support of the country's urban development and housing growth," the statement added.

Tough penalties

Parliament passed the Building Control Amendment Act in September

last year, introducing tougher measures aimed at ending illegal constructions, poor workmanship, and the growing trend of collapsing buildings and construction sites that often claim lives.

A 2021 survey by the National Building Review Board (NBRB) found that 88 percent of buildings do not comply with existing laws, putting users' lives at risk.

In Kampala, many collapsed buildings and construction site accidents have been linked to illegal developments.

The new law tightens the penalty for constructing without a permit from two years' imprisonment and a fine of 50 currency points under the 2013 law to the current Shs40,000 per square metre of built-up area.

The fine for causing death or injury on a building or construction site has increased from Shs5.7 million to Shs10 million.

The penalty for building after the expiry of a permit has also been revised. Previously, it carried a fine of 25 currency points or imprisonment for 13 months, with an additional five currency points for each day the offence continued after notice.

Under the new law, the fine is now one currency point per square metre of built-up area after expiry, or imprisonment for 13 months, or both.

Mr Herbert Zziwa, the spokesperson for the

What they say

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– State House

operations of the NBRB, reducing the number of board members from 16 to nine. The board will include representatives from key ministries – Works and Transport; Labour, Gender and Social Development; Lands, Housing and Urban Development;

Local Government; and the Attorney General's Chambers – alongside engineers, architects, planners, and surveyors.

The Board is empowered to hear and determine complaints from any person, a building committee officer, a building committee, and to issue or evacuation orders where safety is compromised due to non-compliance.

Building Committees at the district level now have the power to demolish or order evacuation of buildings constructed in contravention of the Act and regulations.

The new law also grants applicants the right to appeal to the National Building Review Board if the local Building Committee fails to issue a decision on a building or occupation permit.

RIISING TREND

• **June 2025 – Buziga, Kampala**
A building under construction in Buziga Parish, Makindye Division, collapsed on the night of June 15, killing at least one person and injuring others. Preliminary reports suggested unapproved construction work.

• **April 2023 – K**

A three-storey building under construction caved in, injuring five workers. The collapse was attributed to use of substandard materials.

• **September 2021 – Kisenyi**
A four-storey building under construction collapsed, with several people trapped under debris.

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