

265—9.20(78GA,ch54) Mortgage release certificate.

9.20(1) Definitions. As used in this rule, unless the context otherwise requires:

“*Authority*” means the Iowa finance authority described in Iowa Code chapter 16.

“*Certificate*” means the certificate of release or partial release of mortgage issued by the division.

“*Claim for damages*” means a claim for actual money damages against the division caused by the negligent, wrongful or erroneous filing of a certificate while the staff of the division are acting within the scope of their office or employment, under circumstances where the state, if a private person, would be liable to the claimant for such damage.

“*Division*” means the title guaranty division in the Iowa finance authority.

“*Effective release or satisfaction*” means a release or satisfaction of mortgage pursuant to Iowa Code chapter 655.

“*Mortgage*” means a mortgage or mortgage lien on an interest in real property in this state given to secure a loan in an original principal amount of \$500,000 or less. Any future advance supported by the mortgage that exceeds the original principal amount of \$500,000 shall not be eligible for release under this rule.

“*Mortgagee*” means the grantee of a mortgage. If a mortgage has been assigned of record, the mortgagee is the last person to whom the mortgage is assigned of record.

“*Mortgage servicer*” means the mortgagee or a person other than the mortgagee to whom a mortgagor or the mortgagor’s successor in interest is instructed by the mortgagee to send payments on a loan secured by the mortgage. A person transmitting a payoff statement for a mortgage is the mortgage servicer for purposes of such mortgage.

“*Mortgagor*” means the grantor of a mortgage.

“*Payoff statement*” means a written statement furnished by the mortgage servicer which sets forth all of the following:

1. The unpaid balance of the loan secured by a mortgage, including principal, interest, and any other charges properly due under or secured by the mortgage, or the amount required to be paid in order to release or partially release the mortgage.
2. Interest on a per-day basis for an amount set forth pursuant to “1” above.
3. The address where payment is to be sent or other specific instructions for making a payment.
4. If, after payment of the unpaid balance of the loan secured by the mortgage, the mortgage continues to secure any unpaid obligation due the mortgagee or any unfunded commitment by the mortgagor to the mortgagee, the legal description of the property that will continue to be subject to the mortgage and the legal description of the property that will be released from the mortgage.

“*Person*” shall have the same meaning as in Iowa Code chapter 4.

“*Prior mortgage*” means a mortgage for which an effective release or satisfaction has not been filed of record which was either paid in full by someone other than the real estate lender or closer or was paid by the real estate lender or closer under a previous transaction.

“*Real estate lender or closer*” means a person licensed to regularly lend moneys in Iowa to be secured by a mortgage on real property in this state, a licensed real estate broker, or a licensed attorney.

9.20(2) Request for certificate.

a. A real estate lender or closer may request a certificate from the division by submitting:

- (1) A fully and accurately completed request form.
- (2) All necessary documents and information to support the certifications made on the request form.
- (3) Payment of the filing fee by check or money order made payable to the filing officer of the county in which the certificate is to be recorded in the amount of the filing fee imposed by the filing officer of the county in which the certificate is to be recorded. If duplicate certificates are to be recorded in more than one county, additional checks or money orders payable to the filing officer of such counties shall be submitted.

b. A certificate which is not a full release but is executed and recorded to release part of the security described in a mortgage shall be issued only when the real estate lender or closer has paid the mortgage servicer for the partial release. A certificate shall not be issued for a partial release if the real estate lender or closer is requesting a release pursuant to 1999 Iowa Acts, chapter 54, section 1(7).

c. In the event a person requesting a certificate fails to complete any of the steps or include any of the required information described in this rule, the division may reject the request for a certificate and require the person to refile or amend the request so that it conforms to the provisions of the law or this rule.

9.20(3) Forms.

a. Requests for mortgage release certificates shall be made on forms developed and provided by the division. The forms may be obtained from the division or from the authority's Internet Web site located at www.iowafinanceauthority.gov. The real estate lender or closer must use the forms developed and provided by the division; however, it is permissible to use reproductions of the forms, including reproductions placed in a word processing program. A reproduced form must substantially conform to the forms provided by the division. A nonconforming form may be rejected by the division.

b. The forms to request a certificate of release shall identify the mortgage to be released and shall contain sufficient information to identify that the requester is a real estate lender or closer; establish that the time requirements have elapsed; establish the party or parties to receive notice of the request; indicate that the debt secured by the mortgage to be released has been paid and the mortgage was less than \$500,000; and, in the case of requests for partial releases, include the legal descriptions of the property that will continue to be subject to the mortgage and the property that will be released from the mortgage.

c. The forms giving notice of the request shall be directed to the last-known mortgage servicer and shall contain sufficient information to identify the mortgage to be released; inform the mortgage servicer what is required to prevent the filing of a certificate of release; establish a time limit for the mortgage servicer to respond; and, in the case of requests for partial releases, include the legal descriptions of the property that will continue to be subject to the mortgage and the property that will be released from the mortgage.

d. The certificate of release form shall contain sufficient information to identify the mortgage released; recite the authority for the certificate; recite that the substantive and procedural requirements as to the amount of debt, payment, notice, or other requirements of the division have been met; and, in the case of partial releases, include the legal descriptions of the property that will continue to be subject to the mortgage and the property that will be released from the mortgage.

e. The notice by publication form shall contain sufficient information to identify the mortgage to be released; inform the mortgage servicer what is required to prevent the filing of a certificate of release; establish a time limit for the mortgage servicer to respond; and, in the case of requests for partial releases, include the legal descriptions of the property that will continue to be subject to the mortgage and the property that will be released from the mortgage.

f. All forms may require real estate lenders or closers to provide other information as may be required by law or this rule.

9.20(4) Certification to the division—mortgages paid by real estate lender or closer. To obtain a certificate for a mortgage which the mortgage lender or closer has paid and an effective release or partial release has not been filed of record, the mortgage lender or closer shall certify to the division in writing on the form provided:

a. That more than 30 days have elapsed since the date the payment was sent.

b. That, as of the date of the request for a certificate, no effective mortgage release or partial release appears of record.

c. That the payoff statement satisfies one of the following:

(1) The statement does not indicate that the mortgage continues to secure an unpaid obligation due the mortgagee or an unfunded commitment by the mortgagor to the mortgagee; or

(2) The statement contains the legal description of the property to be released from the mortgage and the legal description of the property that will continue to be subject to the mortgage.

d. That payment was made in accordance with the payoff statement, including a statement as to the date the payment was received by the mortgagee or mortgage servicer, as evidenced by one or more of the following in the records of the real estate lender or closer or its agent:

(1) A bank check, certified check, escrow account check, real estate broker trust account check, or attorney trust account check that was negotiated by the mortgagee or mortgage servicer.

(2) Other documentary evidence satisfactory to the division of payment to the mortgagee or mortgage servicer.

e. That the original principal amount of the mortgage was \$500,000 or less.

f. That the information provided to identify the mortgage to be released includes the name of the mortgagor, the name of the original mortgagee, the mortgage servicer and last-known mailing address, the date of the mortgage, the date of recording, the county of recording, volume and page, or other applicable recording information in the real property records where the mortgage is to be released, and the same information for the last recorded assignment of record.

g. That any documents or other information attached to or included in the form and submitted in support of the request are original documents or are true and accurate reproductions and that the subject matter contained in the documents is true and correct.

h. If the last-known address of the mortgage servicer is unknown and the real estate lender or closer requesting the certificate is unable to locate an address for the last mortgage servicer of record, the real estate lender or closer may attach an affidavit to the request that service by certified mail on the mortgage servicer is not possible because the last-known address of the mortgage servicer is unknown and the real estate lender or closer, after exercising due diligence, is unable to locate an address for the last mortgage servicer of record.

9.20(5) *Certification to the division—prior mortgages.* To obtain a release of a mortgage that has been paid in full by someone other than the real estate lender or closer, or was paid by the real estate lender or closer under a previous transaction, and an effective release has not been filed of record, the mortgage lender or closer shall certify to the division in writing on the form provided:

a. That the mortgage was paid in full in accordance with one of the following:

(1) By someone other than the real estate lender or closer requesting the certificate.

(2) By the real estate lender or closer under a previous transaction.

b. That, as of the date of the request for a certificate, no effective mortgage release appears of record.

c. That the original principal amount of the mortgage was \$500,000 or less.

d. That the information provided to identify the mortgage to be released includes the name of the mortgagor, the name of the original mortgagee, the mortgage servicer and last-known mailing address, the date of the mortgage, the date of recording, the county of recording, volume and page, or other applicable recording information in the real property records where the mortgage is to be released, and the same information for the last recorded assignment of record.

e. That any documents or other information attached to or included in the form and submitted in support of the request are original documents or are true and accurate reproductions and that the subject matter contained in the documents is true and correct.

f. If the last-known address of the mortgage servicer is unknown and the real estate lender or closer requesting the certificate is unable to locate an address for the last mortgage servicer of record, the real estate lender or closer may attach an affidavit to the request that service by certified mail on the mortgage servicer is not possible because the last-known address of the mortgage servicer is unknown and the real estate lender or closer, after exercising due diligence, is unable to locate an address for the last mortgage servicer of record.

9.20(6) *Division determination to give notice—reliance on information submitted.*

a. Upon receipt of a request for issuance of a certificate, the division shall determine that an effective release has not been executed and recorded within 30 days after the date payment was sent or otherwise made in accordance with a payoff statement based upon the information submitted by the person seeking the certificate.

b. The division may use discretion in determining whether an effective release has been executed and recorded and shall rely on the information contained in the request in determining whether further inquiry may be required before giving notice of intent to issue a certificate.

c. The division shall not be required to make a physical search of the real property records in the county or counties where the certificate is to be recorded nor will the division be required to obtain any formal report such as a lien search, abstract opinion, or attorney's opinion. The division may,

but is not required to, verify the status of an effective release by contacting the officer responsible for maintaining the real property records of the county in which the certificate is to be recorded; however, if such verification is determined to be necessary, the division may rely on information from the filing officer obtained by telephone, facsimile, electronic mail, or other such means.

d. The division shall not be required to verify or research the accuracy or status of a title to any legal descriptions which are requested to be partially released. The division shall rely on the descriptions certified to the division in the request for a certificate of partial release.

9.20(7) *Contested case proceeding.* In the event a person who is seeking a certificate is aggrieved by the decision of the division not to issue a certificate and wishes to challenge that decision, the person must request a contested case proceeding pursuant to the rules described in 265—Chapter 7. The request for a contested case proceeding must be filed with the division within ten days from the date of the division's decision not to issue a certificate. An aggrieved person must exhaust all administrative remedies before that person may file a proceeding in any court.

9.20(8) *Notice of intent to issue certificate and recording.*

a. Upon determination that an effective release or partial release has not been executed and recorded within 30 days after the date payment was sent or otherwise made in accordance with a payoff statement, the division shall send written notice of intent to execute a certificate by certified mail to the last-known address of the last mortgage servicer of record. If the real estate lender or closer requesting the certificate has attached an affidavit to the request that service by certified mail on the mortgage servicer is not possible because the last-known address of the mortgage servicer is unknown and the real estate lender or closer is unable to locate an address for the last mortgage servicer of record, the division shall proceed pursuant to paragraph 9.20(8) "e."

b. The notice shall be given by certified mail and the 30-day period shall begin on the date the notice is placed in the custody of the United States Postal Service for delivery to the mortgage servicer.

c. The notice shall state that a certificate shall be recorded by the division after 30 days from the date the notice was mailed unless the mortgage servicer notifies the division of any reason the certificate of release should not be executed and recorded.

d. In the event the notice sent by certified mail to the last-known mortgage servicer of record is returned to the division for the reason that the mortgage servicer is no longer at the address or the certificate of receipt is not returned within 30 days of mailing, the division shall attempt to serve the mortgage servicer pursuant to Iowa Rule of Civil Procedure 1.305.

e. In the event the division is unable to serve the mortgage servicer, the division shall prepare a notice for publication and send it to the real estate lender or closer for publication in a newspaper of general circulation in the county in which the mortgage to be released is recorded. Notice by publication shall be once each week for three consecutive weeks and shall provide for a 20-day period following the last publication for the mortgage servicer to respond to the division. A copy of the notice together with a certificate of publication shall be submitted to the division after the last publication date. Upon receipt of the certified notice and expiration of the time to respond, the division shall file the certificate of release provided that the mortgage servicer has not notified the division of any satisfactory reason the certificate of release should not be executed and recorded. The notice shall also be posted to the authority's Web page.

f. If, prior to executing and recording the certificate of release, the division receives written notification setting forth reasons satisfactory to the division why the certificate of release should not be executed and recorded by the division, the division shall not execute and record the certificate of release. The division may use its discretion in determining whether a satisfactory reason not to record the certificate has been given depending upon the facts. A satisfactory reason not to record the certificate includes, but is not limited to:

- (1) Evidence of an unpaid balance under the terms of any loan secured by the mortgage.
- (2) Evidence that a release or satisfaction of mortgage pursuant to Iowa Code chapter 655 has been placed of record.
- (3) Failure to submit any information requested by the division or required by the law or this rule.

g. In the event the division determines that a certificate should not be recorded, the division shall return the check or money order, which was made payable to the county filing officer, to the real estate lender or closer that requested the certificate.

h. If the division does not receive written notification setting forth a reason satisfactory to the division why the certificate of release should not be executed and recorded, the division shall proceed to execute and record the certificate. The certificate shall be delivered, by regular mail, along with proper recording fees, to the filing officer in the county where the subject property is located.

i. If duplicate certificates were requested, the division will also deliver the duplicate certificates to the filing officer of those counties.

j. If duplicate certificates were not requested, the real estate lender or closer may record a certified copy of the certificate in another county with the same effect as the original.

9.20(9) Certificate—mortgages paid by real estate lender or closer. Certificates issued on mortgages paid by the real estate lender or closer shall contain substantially the following information:

a. That the division sent the 30-day notice required by 1999 Iowa Acts, chapter 54, section 1(2c), and that more than 30 days have elapsed since the date the notice was sent.

b. That the division did not receive written notification setting forth a reason satisfactory to the division why the certificate of release should not be executed and recorded.

c. A statement indicating one of the following:

(1) That the mortgage servicer provided a payoff statement that was used to make payment, and it does not indicate that the mortgage continues to secure an unpaid obligation due the mortgagee or an unfunded commitment by the mortgagor to the mortgagee.

(2) That the mortgage release certificate is a partial release of the mortgage and contains the legal description of the property that will be released from the mortgage and the legal description of the property that will continue to be subject to the mortgage.

d. That payment was made in accordance with the payoff statement including the date the payment was received by the mortgagee or mortgage servicer as evidenced by a bank check, certified check, escrow account check, real estate broker trust account check, or attorney trust account check that was negotiated by the mortgagee or mortgage servicer or other documentary evidence of payment to the mortgagee or mortgage servicer.

e. That the original principal amount of the mortgage was \$500,000 or less.

f. Information to identify the mortgage to be released includes the name of the mortgagor, the name of the original mortgagee, the mortgage servicer, the date of the mortgage, the date of recording, county of recording, volume and page, or other applicable recording information in the real property records where the mortgage is to be released, and the same information for the last recorded assignment of record.

g. That the person executing the certificate is a duly authorized officer or employee of the division.

9.20(10) Certificate—prior mortgages. Certificates issued on mortgages that have been paid in full by someone other than the real estate lender or closer or were paid by the real estate lender or closer under a previous transaction shall contain substantially the following information:

a. That the division sent the 30-day notice required by 1999 Iowa Acts, chapter 54, section 1(2c), and that more than 30 days have elapsed since the date the notice was sent.

b. That the division did not receive written notification setting forth a reason satisfactory to the division why the certificate of release should not be executed and recorded.

c. A statement indicating the mortgage was paid in full in accordance with one of the following:

(1) By someone other than the real estate lender or closer requesting the certificate.

(2) By the real estate lender or closer under a previous transaction.

d. That the original principal amount of the mortgage was \$500,000 or less.

e. Information to identify the mortgage to be released includes the name of the mortgagor, the name of the original mortgagee, the mortgage servicer, the date of the mortgage, the date of recording, county of recording, volume and page, or other applicable recording information in the real property records where the mortgage is to be released, and the same information for the last recorded assignment of record.

f. That the person executing the certificate is a duly authorized officer or employee of the division.

9.20(11) Authority to sign certificate. The board of directors of the division may, by resolution, authorize such personnel within the division as the board should determine to execute and record the certificates pursuant to 1999 Iowa Acts, chapter 54, and this rule.

9.20(12) Records—return to the division. The certificate of release shall contain instructions to the filing officer(s) to return the document to the division, once file-stamped and entered in the real estate records of the county.

9.20(13) Photocopy. The division shall transmit a copy of the recorded certificate to the real estate lender or closer that requested the certificate.

9.20(14) Effect of filing of the certificate of release. For purposes of a release or partial release of a mortgage, a certificate of release executed under this rule that contains the information and statements required under 1999 Iowa Acts, chapter 54, and this rule is prima facie evidence of the facts contained in such release or partial release, is entitled to be recorded with the county recorder where the mortgage is recorded, operates as a release or partial release of the mortgage described in the certificate of release, and may be relied upon by any person who owns or subsequently acquires an interest in the property released from the mortgage. The county recorder shall rely upon the certificate of release to release the mortgage.

9.20(15) Effect of wrongful or erroneous recording of a certificate of release. A wrongful or erroneous recording of a certificate of release by the division or the authority shall not relieve the mortgagor, or the mortgagor's successors or assigns on the debt, from personal liability on the loan or on other obligations secured by the mortgage.

9.20(16) Liability of the division. In addition to any other remedy provided by law, if the division or the authority wrongfully or erroneously records a certificate of release pursuant to this rule, the division is liable to the mortgagee and mortgage servicer for actual damages sustained due to the recording of the certificate of release. A claim for damages is a tort claim as described in Iowa Code chapter 669 since the claim is for money damages caused by the wrongful or erroneous actions of the staff of the division or the authority. The procedures of Iowa Code chapter 669 shall apply to any claim for damages arising out of 1999 Iowa Acts, chapter 54.

Prior to any such satisfaction or resolution of a claim for wrongful or erroneous filing of a certificate of release, the division will inform the real estate lender or closer that requested the certificate about the proposed terms and allow it a reasonable opportunity to resolve or satisfy the claim on other terms.

9.20(17) Subrogation. Upon payment of a claim relating to the recording of a certificate, the division is subrogated to the rights of the claimant against all persons relating to the claim including, but not limited to, the real estate lender or closer that requested the certificate.

9.20(18) Additional remedies. In addition to any other remedy provided by law, the division may recover from the real estate lender or closer who requested the certificate all expenses incurred, and all damages including punitive or exemplary damages paid to the mortgagee or mortgage service provider, in satisfaction or resolution of a claim for wrongful or erroneous filing of a certificate of release.

9.20(19) Record keeping. The original certificate of release document shall remain in the records of the division or the authority for the minimum period of one year after execution. After this time, records may be stored by electronic or other means. Requests and other documents generated or received under this system shall be indexed in such a manner as to allow their retrieval at a future date.

This rule is intended to implement 1999 Iowa Acts, chapter 54.