

LEGISLATIVE DIGEST
(Substituted 3/1/2016)

[Building Code - Building Façade Inspection and Maintenance and Establishing Fee]

Ordinance amending the Building Code to require that 1) the façades of certain buildings having five or more stories be inspected periodically by a licensed architect or engineer, 2) inspection reports be submitted to the owner and the Department of Building Inspection according to an inspection and reporting schedule, 3) maintenance of the façades be conducted in accordance with an Administrative Bulletin that is based on a national standard, 4) establishing a fee to compensate the Department for review and related evaluation processing, 5) making findings including environmental findings and findings under the California Health and Safety Code, and 6) directing the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors to forward this ordinance to the California Building Standards Commission upon final passage.

Existing Law

The Building Code establishes minimum requirements for, among other things, the construction, alteration, repair, and maintenance of buildings and structures. Chapters 16 and 16A regulate structural design.

Over the years, San Francisco has added to Chapter 16 of the California Building Code three additional chapters to implement local programs that reduce earthquake hazards for existing buildings: (1) Chapter 16B - Earthquake Hazard Reduction in Unreinforced Masonry Bearing Wall Buildings, (2) Chapter 16C - Seismic Strengthening Provisions for Unreinforced Masonry Bearing Wall Buildings, and (3) Chapter 16D - Parapets and Appendages – Retroactive Provisions.

Amendments to Current Law

The proposed ordinance adds Chapter 16E to the Building Code to require initial inspections, periodic inspections, maintenance, and repair of the façades of buildings of Construction Type I, II, III, or IV that are five or more stories. Buildings for which a permit application for new construction was submitted after January 1, 1998 are exempt from the requirement for an initial inspection. These buildings shall begin periodic inspections 30 years from the issuance of the Certificate of Final Completion for new construction. The Director of the Department of Building Inspection may waive the initial inspection for buildings where comprehensive façade inspection and necessary maintenance, restoration, or replacement has been performed during the ten years preceding the date of the required initial inspection report due date.

The façade includes all areas on the exterior of the building including all exterior walls and exterior wall coverings, windows, balconies, cornices, parapets, architectural trim and embellishments, appurtenances, and all elements listed in the ordinance. It also includes walls

supported at the roof level, such as penthouse walls and chimneys, and walls and appurtenances where such area has been converted from an exterior area by enclosing the area under a roof, skylight, or other covering.

ASTM E 2270 Standard Practices for Periodic Inspection of Building Façades for Unsafe Conditions lists the elements that are to be periodically inspected. Additional elements to be inspected are: (1) attached equipment such as communications equipment, pipes and ductwork, (2) decorative elements such as urns, friezes, balustrades, and attached artwork, (3) signs, (4) fire escapes, (5) flagpoles, (6) vertical extensions such as vents, (7) lights and other fixtures, (8) hanging air conditioners and other devices, and (9) other elements that could pose a safety hazard if dislodged. Inspection reports are required to be submitted and a fee is established to compensate the Department for inspection report review, evaluation, and processing related to implementation and enforcement of Chapter 16E.

Background Information

Section 19161 of the California Health and Safety Code authorizes each city, city and county or county to assess the earthquake hazard in its jurisdiction and identify buildings that may be potentially hazardous to life in the event of an earthquake. Section 19161 states that potentially hazardous buildings include those with “exterior parapets or ornamentation that may fall.” The stated purpose of this ordinance is to promote public safety and welfare by reducing the risk of death or injury that may result from the effects of deterioration on exterior façades of buildings by requiring periodic inspections, maintenance, and repair of the façades and certain elements that could pose a safety hazard if dislodged. The inspections and maintenance required by this ordinance will also help protect historic buildings and will reduce property damage in earthquakes, thus contributing to the City’s resiliency goals.

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