

LEGISLATIVE DIGEST

[Existing Building Code - Supplemental Inspections for Tall Buildings]

Ordinance amending the Existing Building Code to require buildings with 15 or more stories to conduct and submit supplemental inspection reports that will focus on windows and exterior glass surfaces to identify any defective or damaged materials that may cause glass failures; and affirming the Planning Department’s determination under the California Environmental Quality Act.

Existing Law

Chapter 5F of the Existing Building Code provides a schedule for owners of buildings that are five stories or taller to submit inspection reports documenting the safety of the façade of their buildings every 10 years. The Chapter provides that buildings that received their building permit after 1998 are exempt from the inspection schedule and instead must provide their initial inspection 30 years after receipt of their certificate of occupancy or after being alerted by the Department to conduct and submit an inspection report.

Amendments to Current Law

The Proposed Legislation would require all buildings 15 stories or taller (“tall buildings”) to conduct supplemental inspections in between comprehensive inspections. Supplemental inspections will focus on windows and exterior glass surfaces to identify any defective or damaged materials that may cause glass failure. For tall buildings built in or after 1998 that have not submitted an initial comprehensive façade report, supplemental inspections will start in 2024 and will be required every 5 years until the comprehensive inspection report requirement begins (30 years after the building’s construction). After that, supplemental inspections will take place in between comprehensive inspections such that the buildings alternate between submitting comprehensive and supplemental reports every five years.

Background Information

After a series of storms battered the City and resulted in glass failures at several recently constructed high-rise buildings in the early months of 2023, the Board adopted legislation amending Chapter 5F to allow immediate inspection of buildings where failures occurred and directing the Department of Building Inspection to report back on the causes of those failures. Based on those inspections and the report’s finding that most glass failures could have been detected and mitigated before storm conditions arose through visual inspections, the Department of Building Inspection recommended instituting supplemental inspection reports for tall buildings every five years even for newer tall buildings that are not required to conduct comprehensive façade inspection reports for several more years. .

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