

LEGISLATIVE DIGEST

[Existing Building Code - Façade Inspections for Tall Buildings]

Ordinance amending the Existing Building Code to require buildings with 15 or more stories constructed after 1998 to conduct and submit façade inspection reports; 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. 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.

Amendments to Current Law

The Proposed Legislation would revise the exemption for buildings built after 1998 from a blanket exemption to one that only applies to buildings 14 stories or shorter. For buildings built after 1998 that are 15 stories or taller, the Proposed Legislation requires submission of the initial façade inspection report on November 1, 2023 or within six months of notification by the Department of Building Inspection, whichever is sooner. The Proposed Legislation would also clarify that the Building Official may require façade inspection from any building, regardless of inspection requirements in Chapter 5F, if the Official determines there is a potential health or safety hazard.

Background Information

After a series of storms battered the City and resulted in glass failures at several recently constructed high-rise buildings downtown, San Francisco Mayor London Breed issued an emergency declaration on March 27, 2023 that, among other things, allowed the Building Official to require inspections of the façades of potentially hazardous buildings regardless of the inspection schedules prescribed in Chapter 5F. The Proposed Legislation codifies this ability and provides a new compliance schedule for recently constructed high-rise buildings that otherwise would not require façade inspections for many years.