



January 28, 2019

Tim M. Hart, SE  
President  
Structural Engineers of Northern California  
575 Market Street, Suite 2125  
San Francisco, CA. 94105

Dear Mr. Hart,

Thank you for your letter to Deputy Director Daniel Lowrey dated January 24, 2019. I am writing to you to provide you with an update based on the role of Building Inspection Division (BID) relating to the inspection of the work for Soft-Story projects.

The 2016 San Francisco Existing Building Code (SFBC) and specifically, Chapter 4D references the compliance requirements for the Mandatory retrofit of soft-story buildings. A Building Inspector from BID performs the required building inspections. When an approved building permit has been issued, the inspections are scheduled by the contractor who performs the work.

The inspections scheduled and performed are mandated by the 108A.5 of the 2016 San Francisco Building Code (SFBC). For soft-story projects, inspections typically include reinforcing steel, structural steel, a frame inspection (hold downs, shear wall/shear diaphragm nailing and mechanical connections), lath or gypsum board and final inspection. These inspections are performed when scheduled and are based on review of the approved permit documents in relation to the as-built field conditions.

Building Inspectors will approve an inspection based on determining consistency between the drawings and the observations at the site or not approve the inspection, issue a notice for corrections to be made and require that another inspection be scheduled for field verification of the correction.

On site, the Building Inspector works closely with the Special Inspector from the approved testing agency, as well as with the engineer of record to determine ongoing compliance with Chapter 17 of the 2016 California Building Code throughout the duration of the project.

The Special Inspection requirements are documented on the approved permit drawings. Final letters must be submitted to DBI to validate these Special Inspections. The letters are on the letterhead of the Engineer of Record and/or the testing agency's engineer. Testing lab and special inspector documentation is included with these final letters as necessary. Again, these letters are based on site inspections and review by testing agency certified professionals and Engineers of Record. Prior to final inspection, final letters of certification must be submitted to and approved by DBI substantiating compliance with Chapter 17 of the 2016 California Building Code. Furthermore, the DBI system blocks scheduling or completion of final inspections on building permits inclusive of soft-story until all special inspections are completed.



The Building Inspectors are from a construction background and are certified by ICC. They are very familiar with these type of inspections and perform in excess of 5,000 inspections per month. Each and all of these inspections is treated equally with the importance deserved.

There is an inspection spot-check process in place whereby, a Senior Building Inspector conducts a site visit to verify that the inspection performed by the subordinate Inspector meets the standards for compliance with the approved drawings, the building code and the requirements other Departments and Agencies. Knowing the importance of these soft-story projects, there are more soft-story spot-check inspections performed than any other type of building permit.

The building inspection history for all building permits is documented at <http://dbiweb.sfgov.org/dbipts/> including those that relate to the mandatory retrofit of soft-story projects.

As an example, please see <http://dbiweb.sfgov.org/dbipts/Default2.aspx?page=PermitDetails>

Should you have any further questions regarding this matter, please feel free to contact me.

Very truly yours,

Tom C. Hui S.E., C.B.O.  
Director

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Patrick O'Riordan".

Patrick O'Riordan  
Chief Building Inspector

cc: Tom C. Hui S.E., C.B.O., Director  
Daniel Lowrey, Deputy Director  
Edward Sweeney, Deputy Director  
Gary Ho, Plan Review Services  
Robert Chun, Plan Review Services

BID File

Attachments:  
Samples of Spot Check Inspections