



Spring is an ideal time to access your building for leaks and Local Law 11 Cycle 7 compliancy

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The adage that "April showers bring May flowers" may lift our spirits. However, with days of heavy rain compounded by the freeze thaw effects of a frigid winter; along with the flowers you will undoubtedly be notified of numerous building leaks.

The effects of water infiltration can be devastating to a building's structural integrity. Leaks are the most elusive of all façade problems. A complaint of an active leak is often far removed from the initial point of entry. Water may be entering in one line of the building and cracked, peeling or bee-hiving of paint is noted elsewhere. A quick fix of plaster and paint may mollify for a time but resolves no more than repeat repairs.

Strong wind and rain can dislodge the mortar and caulking of joints, sills and lintels. Winter snow drifts may have compromised the flashing system allowing water to seep beneath the structural deck. Terraces may have cracked or loose tiles from water ponding and then freezing. Chimneys which have worked overtime throughout winter may have shifting cap stones or cracks. And, if your roof wasn't in good shape prior, those fissures, distended seams and bulges are far more evident, along with hidden moisture underneath.

Exterior repairs can involve months of work at a hefty price tag. In this economy many buildings are shelving large-scale projects until required by law. That law is formally known as Local Law 11/98. According to the Department of Buildings, the new New York City Construction Code (28-302.1 A.C.) mandates periodic inspection of the exterior walls and appurtenances of buildings greater than six stories in height. February 21st of this year officially began the new Cycle 7 and with it some new rules and definitions. The new cycle will be staggered for filing requirements through February 2013, depending upon the last digit of the buildings block number. This should assist in less confusion in the volume of filings while availing better qualified exterior contractors to manage the increase work load.

Staggering is a good plan but what about the buildings that fall at the end of the cycle? Or, those who file for Safe with a Repair and Maintenance Program (SWARMP)? If on going preventive maintenance practices aren't put into place, these buildings might inevitably need much larger scopes of work specified for compliancy.

What can a building do in lean times? First, your structural engineer or valued contractor should be kept informed of building conditions. Secondly, documentation is of utmost importance including a building wide leak survey. This will not only furnish a comprehensive overview to your building's structural health, it will provide shareholders or tenants with a perception of due diligence. Periodically updating this survey will prevent unnecessary work in the same locations. Documentation helps resolve a dispute over what was or wasn't performed by the contractor. Furthermore, reminding the occupant that work to resolve their problem was addressed, though the

ceiling or wall may still require time to dry out. Having a moisture meter on premises to test for wetness is a good idea.

Spring is an ideal time for visual inspections with field binoculars. Your engineer, exterior contractor or resident manager can spot bulging masonry, larger cracks and open mortar joints, which if repaired, will be far less costly than having conditions worsen over time. Checking that window air conditioners are properly installed, unclogging roof and terrace drains of leaves and other debris, and repositioning uplifted flashings are simple yet effective maintenance measures.

Remedial repairs can be made to the roof as well. Frank Jurasits, senior project manager of KR&R states, "Patching areas most susceptible to water infiltration with a reputable roofing product or applying liquid flashing cement to areas of culpability, including pitch pockets, drains or skylights will provide a solid repair for a year or more."

With more rain throughout spring and having had so much snow accumulation this past winter there's no doubt that there will be leaks occurring. Focusing your building on preventive maintenance now will not only save money down the line and into your particular LL Cycle 7, but the chronic headache of recurring complaints.

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