



Rule sets standard for safe use of microturbines in buildings

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A new rule setting the country's first standard for the safe use and installation of microturbine systems in residential and commercial buildings is in effect. Microturbines are highly efficient turbine generators that recover and reuse the wasted heat of their own combustion process, after producing electricity and heat for a building, to provide energy for other building operations. By reusing heat that would otherwise be exhausted into the atmosphere, microturbines greatly increase the usable energy produced by fossil fuels, reduce carbon emissions, and provide building owners opportunities for operational cost savings. The new rule was published in the city record and takes effect immediately.

I want to thank the cogeneration Task Force, led by buildings commissioner Patricia Lancaster and fire commissioner Nicholas Scoppetta, for the serious attention they've given this issue and for coming up with a rule that will allow for the use of microturbines in buildings here in New York and to ensure that they are safely and properly installed. This rule will help us to meet our commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions citywide by 30% between now and 2030, and it will help spur the real estate and development communities to build more efficient, greener projects moving forward. Buildings in New York City generate 79% of the city's greenhouse gas emissions. By supplying on-site power generation to buildings, microturbine systems provide an energy-efficient supplement to power plants, New York City's conventional power supply. Estimates show, for a given amount of fossil fuel, microturbines generate 70% to 80% of its usable energy, whereas only 30% to 35% of the energy produced by power plants is usable.

The market for on-site power generation technology has expanded in recent years as residential and commercial building owners demanded new ways to lower building operational costs and provide back-up energy in the case of power losses.

While regulations exist for microturbine systems used in manufacturing buildings, no major U.S. city has regulated the safe use and installation of microturbines in residential and commercial buildings until now. The new rule enables building owners to take advantage of microturbine technology, which will help the City reach its PlaNYC goal of expanding clean distributed power generation citywide.

Under the new rule, microturbine systems approved by nationally recognized testing laboratories can be installed at residential and commercial buildings in various locations, including within weatherproof enclosures at grade or on roofs and within mechanical rooms built with 2-hour fire-resistance rated walls. To install approved microturbine systems, a building owner must receive clearance from the utility company and file an application with the Buildings Department. Once a permit is obtained and the system is installed, an owner must obtain a permit from the Fire Department to operate it.

Michael Bloomberg is mayor of New York. N.Y.

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