



## **Construction-related accidents decrease by 18% according to Mayor Bloomberg; Even as construction permits increase across New York City**

January 30, 2012 - Front Section

Mayor Michael Bloomberg and buildings commissioner Robert LiMandri unveiled an 18% decrease in construction-related accidents in the city for 2011, despite a 7.7% increase in the issuance of construction permits citywide. Construction-related injuries also decreased across the city last year - falling from 165 reported accidents in 2010 to 152 in 2011, a reduction of 7.8%. In total, there were five construction-related fatalities in 2011, a slight increase from four fatalities in 2010, but a 73% decrease when compared to 2008. In addition to increased enforcement, expanded outreach to construction industry members and greater cooperation by builders throughout the city, the Department of Buildings has implemented more than 25 new construction safety laws since 2008 to enhance public safety and provide businesses and developers with the confidence to invest in the five boroughs, create good-paying jobs and promote economic growth. Mayor Bloomberg made the announcement at a T.F. Cornerstone construction site in Long Island City, one of the tens of thousands in the five boroughs which applied for a construction permit in 2011, where he was joined by congresswoman Carolyn Maloney, assembly member Rory Lancman, council member Jimmy Van Bramer, Real Estate Board of New York president Steve Spinola and Building Trades Employers' Association president and CEO Lou Coletti.

"One of the best ways we can keep our City's economic recovery on track and help put more New Yorkers to work is by ensuring businesses and developers have the confidence to invest in New York City," said Bloomberg. "The good news is even as construction activity rose by nearly 8% last year, the number of construction-related accidents fell by more than 18%. Deputy mayor for operations Cas Holloway, his predecessor Ed Skyler, commissioner LiMandri and their respective teams have done a remarkable job making construction sites safer for those who use them, while making it easier and more efficient for businesses to create jobs and get projects off the ground."

Since 2008, the Department of Buildings has implemented a series of comprehensive initiatives to promote construction safety and increase awareness and cooperation among construction industry members. In large part due to these efforts, construction-related accidents and injuries have fallen across the board each of the last three years. The total number of reported construction-related injuries decreased from 165 in 2010 to 152 in 2011, a decline of 7.8% and 37% lower than in 2009. Likewise, construction-related accidents in New York City fell 18% from 157 in 2010 to 128 in 2011, a reduction of 18 percent and a 41% decrease when compared to 2009.

"By reducing construction accidents even as construction activity increases, commissioner LiMandri and our partners in the development industry continue to prioritize safety and development," said deputy mayor for operations Cas Holloway. "Expediting safe development creates jobs and spurs economic growth - and we will work together to substantially decrease the time and costs of getting

the approvals needed to continue building New York City."

"Strengthening New York City's construction industry is a priority for the Bloomberg Administration," Deputy Mayor for Economic Development Robert K. Steel said. "As construction activity rebounds along with the rest of the economy, it is critical that we expand on the gains in workplace and public safety that have been achieved in the last several years."

"As construction work steadily increases throughout the City, accidents continue to decline - proving that industry members recognize the importance of safety on any job site," said Buildings Commissioner LiMandri. "Development is critical to this City's growth and success, but there's no reason why that work cannot be done safely. With new laws, tougher enforcement and more cooperation from the industry, our inspectors, engineers, architects and attorneys have made construction sites safer - meaning a safer city for all New Yorkers."

"A rising construction rate plus a declining accident rate equals great news for workers and our city's economy," said Congresswoman Maloney. "New York has fared better than most cities during the economic downturn, and that's due to continued private-sector investment and the leadership shown by Mayor Bloomberg and his team. I thank the Mayor for his work to ensure that New York remains the safest big city in America."

"Both the city and the state recognize that a safe workplace is not a privilege, it's a right," said Assemblyman Lancman. "The Mayor's success in making construction sites safer is not just a statistic, it's men and women coming home to their families safe after a hard day's work."

While the most common construction accident remains workers falling, the number of workers who were injured in a fall declined from 66 in 2010 to 52 in 2011, a 21 percent decrease. Last year, after the Department of Buildings discovered unsafe construction conditions, it issued more than 5,100 full and partial Stop Work Orders. Of the five construction-related fatalities in 2011, all involved construction workers who were killed as a result of improper procedures on the job site, such as a lack of fall protection and improper construction practices.

"The construction industry is vital to the health and strength of the New York City economy because of the great numbers of jobs it creates," said Steve Spinola, President of the Real Estate Board of New York. "Supporting and encouraging construction projects keeps the real estate market competitive and attracts businesses and residents to our city. By having safe sites, we not only protect our workers and New Yorkers, but we are able to develop sites faster and better. We congratulate the Mayor and the Administration on their safety and training initiatives, and we congratulate the real estate developers, construction contractors, and construction workers for achieving this reduction in accidents to historic lows."

"It is appropriate that we are here at the East Coast project in Queens, where labor-management cooperation between the unionized Building and Construction Trades and TF Cornerstone produced a cost-saving project labor agreement that made it possible to move forward with important economic development and create thousands of jobs in our industry," said Gary La Barbera, President of the Building and Construction Trades Council of Greater New York. "It is the same kind of cooperative approach between the mayor and his administration, working with labor and management, that is improving safety as we continue to recover and rebuild our great city."

"BTEA union contractors are proud to be partners with city government in working to improve public and worker safety," said Lou Coletti, President and CEO of the Building Trades Employers' Association. "This shows the millions of dollars BTEA union contractors spend on safety training and other initiatives to meet city standards is working."

A few examples of the new initiatives launched by the Department of Buildings in recent years to enhance public safety, provide greater oversight and increase industry awareness include:

- \* First revision of the City's construction codes in 40 years, which took full effect in 2009 and expanded safety requirements during the construction process;
- \* More than 25 new construction safety laws, including a smoking ban on all construction sites, mandatory training for all tower crane workers and requiring the uniform color coding and regular pressure testing of standpipe sprinkler systems;
- \* Creation of a Stalled Sites Unit that has conducted more than 14,000 inspections of stalled construction sites to ensure properties are maintained in a safe manner;
- \* Creation of a site safety program for major construction projects that allows contractors to submit plans for an enhanced review by Department experts; and
- \* Launch of Experience Is Not Enough, a citywide safety campaign to encourage construction workers to use proper fall protection, such as safety harnesses, guardrails or nets. More than 12,000 banners, bracelets and posters were distributed to construction sites across the City.

While there were notable decreases in construction-related accidents and injuries, the number of initial construction permits - including new buildings, major and minor alterations and demolitions - increased by 7.7 percent from 80,675 to 86,895 in 2011. This marks the third consecutive year where the issuance of permits has increased, fueled by a rise in small-scale construction, a positive sign for both the construction industry and the economic future of the City. Of the initial construction-related permits issued last year, the largest increase occurred in demolition permits - a key indicator of future construction projects - from 1,645 in 2010 to 1,848 in 2011. Construction permits for new buildings also increased slightly from 1,517 to 1,523. Similarly, permits for major alterations, or Alteration Type 1, rose from 2,878 to 3,081 in 2011 - a 7.1 percent spike - and permits for minor alterations, or Alteration Type 2 and Alteration Type 3, increased 7.8 percent from 74,635 to 80,443.

This past year, the Department of Buildings launched a number of new programs to accelerate the development process and speed up job creation without sacrificing public safety, including the creation of the NYC Development Hub. The Hub, a state-of-the-art project review center in Lower Manhattan which receives and reviews digital construction plans, allows plan examiners to review building designs easier, faster and without the use of paper for the first time in New York City. Licensed architects and engineers can submit digital construction plans and resolve any issues with City officials in a virtual environment - without ever having to meet in person. The Department also expanded its eFiling system to allow for more online permit approvals than ever before, eliminating the need to wait in line and pay for mailing costs and saving customers both time and money.