



Upgrading alarm systems and our loss of a zoning master

September 10, 2012 - Design / Build

We've often written on the topic of fire safety, most recently on sprinklers in the context of the 2019 Deadline for Sprinkler Compliance. Hand in hand with sprinklers are alarms - the systems that notify tenants as well as the FDNY of danger within a building.

Old buildings have old sprinkler systems, they also have old alarm systems. The FDNY has acknowledged that there are quite a number of existing buildings with older fire alarm systems which are not signed off. In response, owners have received violations, which have forced them to evaluate the cost of replacing the existing system. Rather than solve the problem, owners have paid the violations and thereby bought time to postpone the expensive and complex challenge of replacing the existing systems.

In such cases, the most rational conversation involves the possibility of keeping the existing system in place, and making modest modifications to enable sign-off. The owner's professional team will need to prepare a study; which examines the existing system thoroughly, and identify the steps necessary to bring the system up to current FDNY standards. In many cases, the modification work will offer a much simpler scope, for a fraction of the time and effort of a new install.

So, what's the process? The owner should have the system inspected, and obtain the proper sign-off. Procedurally, the job should be filed at the Department of Buildings and Fire Department concurrently. As expected, a request should be filed with chief Pigot, the FDNY director of technology management.

Collectively between the chief's input and the team at the fire alarm unit together with the owner's detailed plan, the existing fire alarm systems can be legalized. The details for filing the application are available on the FDNY's Technology Management Bulletin No 3/2012.

In sadder news I'd like to take a moment to recognize Sandy Lindenbaum, who recently passed away on August 17th. Sandy was widely considered one of the city's leading land use attorneys, and an expert of the city's zoning laws.

In a career that spanned fifty years, Sandy's name became synonymous with large scale, complex, game changing projects. As a pioneer in the city's zoning world, he coordinated efforts and knowledge with the Board of Standards, Appeals, and City Planning Commission.

His long standing relationships included most of New York's most prominent developers - Vornado, Macklowe, Trump, Silverstein. His guidance cleared the approval for the installation of the now iconic glass cube under the General Motors Building, as well as every iteration of the Whitney Museum.

I met Sandy early on in my career and have admired him and his work ever since. On behalf of everyone at Metropolis, I would like to send my deepest condolences to his family and everyone who knew him. A great man leaves a great legacy, and Sandy left us an unforgettable skyline, and for that I'll be forever thankful.

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