



New regulations enacted for N.Y.C. demolition and abatement actions

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According to mayor Michael Bloomberg, a series of changes in the way demolition and abatement operations are regulated and carried out in the city. The changes are outlined in a report, strengthening the safety, oversight and coordination of construction, demolition and abatement operations, that was presented to the mayor by a working group led by deputy mayor Edward Skyler. There are 33 specific recommendations in the report designed to strengthen agencies' inspection practices, increase notifications and data-sharing between agencies, and improve the safety of abatement and demolition operations. The report re-orientes agency enforcement efforts to focus on a shared set of fire and life-safety concerns, regardless of which city agency is working at a site. The mayor was joined by deputy mayor Skyler, fire commissioner Nicholas Scoppetta, acting buildings commissioner Robert LiMandri, department of environmental protection deputy commissioner Robert Avaltroni, and Cas Holloway, special advisor to the mayor and chief of staff to Skyler.

"Asbestos abatement, construction and demolition work have their own inherent risks, especially when they intersect," said Bloomberg. "After months of exhaustive analysis and review, the group I asked Ed Skyler to convene to review this issue developed 33 recommendations to strengthen agency practices and improve safety, and today, I am accepting them in full."

"Instead of focusing narrowly on the regulatory roles of particular agencies, we looked broadly at all the component parts of construction, demolition and abatement, to assess these operations in terms of the overarching priority of public safety," said Skyler. "After an exhaustive review, we have found 33 specific ways to improve safety for first responders, workers and all New Yorkers, and at the mayor's direction, we will implement all of them as quickly as possible."

Last fall, a working group of city agencies began its review of the regulation of demolition and abatement operations, agency practices regarding enforcement, and the way these operations are carried out in the field. The working group draws members from the Departments of Buildings (DOB), Environmental Protection (DEP), and Fire (FDNY) as well as from the mayor's office of operations and the law department.

In the city, the buildings department issues permits for building construction and demolition, and buildings and the fire department conduct inspections of construction and demolition sites. The DEP regulates and inspects asbestos abatement. The recommendations developed by the working group address each of these areas. The city has already begun to implement some of the recommendations in the report immediately, and will work with industry stake holders and others to implement all 33 recommendations as quickly as possible. The recommendations fall into three groups: abatement operations; demolition operations; and inspections conducted by FDNY, DEP and DOB.

