



**New York City mandatory parapet inspections starting
January 1, 2024 - by Joe DiPompeo**

November 14, 2023 - Owners Developers & Managers



Joe DiPompeo

To ensure the safety and longevity of these structures, and the safety of the public on the street, New York City has introduced a new mandate. Starting on January 1, 2024, all buildings in NYC with parapets facing the public right-of-way, regardless of height, must undergo an annual inspection. This initiative is a significant step toward maintaining the city's architectural integrity and ensuring the safety of its residents and visitors.

Understanding Parapets and the Mandate

Parapets are low walls or barriers that extend above the roof line of a building. They serve both functional and aesthetic purposes, providing a barrier at the edge of the roof while also adding character to a building's design. Over time, parapets can deteriorate due to exposure to the elements, poor maintenance, or other factors. This deterioration can lead to safety hazards and structural issues if left unchecked. Many low-rise brownstone/rowhouse structures have brick or stone masonry parapets, which is particularly susceptible to age and weather-related damage and failures.

Beginning in 2024, every building owner in New York City must adhere to the requirements outlined in Section 28-301.1.1 of the New York City Administrative Code. The mandate applies to all buildings with parapets facing the public right-of-way, regardless of their height, with some exceptions for detached one- or two-family homes or buildings equipped with barriers preventing access to the exterior wall.

The Need for Mandatory Parapet Inspections

The decision to implement mandatory parapet inspections in New York City stems from a desire to proactively address potential risks associated with aging and neglected parapets. Parapet failures can lead to falling debris, posing a threat to pedestrians, vehicles, and nearby buildings. Moreover, unchecked parapet issues can result in costly structural damage and even compromise the integrity of the entire building.

Key Elements of the New Mandate

Starting on January 1, 2024, all building owners within the jurisdiction of New York City will be required to undergo parapet inspections as part of their routine building maintenance. Here are some key elements of the mandate:

Annual Observations: A Safety Measure

To comply with the mandate, building owners are required to have annual observations of their

parapets performed. These observations should be conducted by a professional engineer to ensure that parapets are structurally sound and safe for both building occupants and pedestrians below.

The inspection must include:

Verification of the parapet's plumbness by a horizontal distance within one-eighth of its cross-sectional thickness in any location.

Examination of the parapet for excessive deterioration, which may include displacement, cracks (horizontal or diagonal), missing or loose bricks, deteriorated mortar joints, spalling or rot.

Verification that any additional structures or equipment affixed to the parapet, such as telecommunications equipment, railings, or signs, are installed and maintained in a stable condition.

Notification of Hazardous or Unsafe Conditions

If the engineer identifies any hazardous or unsafe conditions during the inspection, they must immediately report these findings to the Department of Buildings by calling 311 and emailing parapets@buildings.nyc.gov. The safety of the public is paramount, and the owner must take steps to address unsafe conditions swiftly. This may involve installing public protection measures, such as erecting a sidewalk shed, closing off the area with a fence, or installing safety netting to secure the safety of pedestrians.

All identified unsafe conditions must be rectified within ninety days of the notification to the Department, and public protection measures must remain in place until the issues are resolved.

Comprehensive Reporting

Comprehensive reporting is an essential aspect of the parapet inspection process. The report should include the following information:

- The property's address.
- Owner information, including their name, mailing address, and telephone number must be provided.
- Information about the person conducting the observation, including their name, mailing address, telephone number, affiliation with the building or owner, and business name if applicable.
- The date(s) of the observation.
- A location plan of the parapet(s) observed.
- Details about the parapet's construction, including material, height, and thickness.

- A summary of general conditions noted during the inspection and whether any unsafe conditions were found. Additionally, any actions taken to remedy unsafe conditions should be documented.
- Information about any repairs made to the parapet since the previous inspection.
- Dated photos that document the parapet's conditions at the time of the observation.

Documentation

Inspection reports, including photographs and findings, must be submitted to the owner and the owner must keep the reports on file for six years. This documentation will serve as a record of the parapet's condition at the time of inspection and will be used for compliance verification.

Remediation

If issues are identified during the inspection, building owners will be required to take appropriate remedial action. This may include repairs, maintenance, or, in extreme cases, parapet replacement.

Penalties for non-compliance: Building owners who fail to comply with the new mandate may face penalties, fines, or legal action. Non-compliance not only jeopardizes the safety of the building but also poses a risk to the city and its residents.

Benefits of the Mandate

The mandatory parapet inspection mandate offers several benefits to New York City:

Enhanced Safety

Regular inspections will help identify and mitigate potential parapet-related hazards, reducing the risk of accidents and injuries.

Preservation of Architectural Heritage

By addressing parapet issues promptly, the mandate contributes to the preservation of the city's historic and iconic buildings.

Long-Term Cost Savings

Preventative maintenance and timely repairs can extend the lifespan of parapets and buildings, reducing the total life cycle cost of the building.

Strengthened Building Resilience

Ensuring the structural integrity of parapets enhances a building's ability to withstand environmental factors such as severe weather events.

New York City's decision to implement mandatory parapet inspections starting on January 1, 2024, is a step toward ensuring the safety and longevity of its buildings. These inspections may seem like a minor detail, but they play a vital role in maintaining structural integrity and ensuring public safety. As the city continues to grow and evolve, it is essential that all building owners adhere to these regulations to protect their occupants, passersby, and the city's rich architectural history.

Joe DiPompeo, PE is the president of Structural Workshop, LLC, Mountain Lakes, N.J.

New York Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540