



LiMandri keynote speaker at BOMA/NY Annual Conference

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The predominant comment that Buildings Department Commissioner Robert LiMandri (NYC Department of Buildings) heard from the general public when he took over the position earlier this fall was, "We've got to do something about those cranes." He couldn't agree more.

In his keynote address to the BOMA/NY Annual Conference held October 15 at the New York Marriott Marquis, the newly-appointed commissioner declared that "there is no reason we cannot build safely in! Thousands of buildings are doing it right now." Accidents, he believes, are due to "people not doing their job. We need to hold the individuals accountable who are not following the codes and not following up on the job site." He pointed, in particular, to those "who are not in the room" as being at fault, and stated that as commissioner, he would move the industry to the place "where we all want it to be," emphasizing his department will be "transparent."

LiMandri, who opened his talk by recalling his days as a building manager, called on the BOMA/NY members to make sure that their staff members are all thoroughly familiar with the codes and enforcement measures, and promised equal diligence from the city, where "the guys on the ground are being pro-active" and being equipped with hand-held computer devices with connectivity so that inspections can be done more efficiently.

Inspections are changing rapidly under the commissioner, who, while still acting commissioner earlier this year, launched an unprecedented \$4 million investment "to conduct an intensive, in-depth assessment of high-risk construction activities, including high-rise concrete operations, excavations and crane operations, to make these specialized trades safer." Engineers have fanned out across the city to assess materials, processes and systems employed during these high-risk operations. They are supplementing the department's usual inspection staff with these analyses, and are analyzing the department as well—reviewing current protocols to see where changes can be made in the oversight procedures.

The department will not wait on a final report, he said, but will adopt the recommendations on an on-going basis. Among the key areas under examination are:

Safety of Concrete Operations

Conducted in the open and often many stories above the street level, concrete operations account for 30% of all high-rise construction incidents, which almost exclusively involve falling materials. The city is reviewing every phase of operations.

Excavations

Given the density of the New York marketplace, excavating for foundation work carries high risks if not executed according to properly engineered plans, and comprise 13% of all city construction accidents. The city's excavations team has conducted 2,575 inspections and issued 475 Stop Work Orders - demonstrating the need for additional oversight. Current on-site practices are now under examination, as are the department's inspection protocols.

Cranes

Accidents involving these high-rise construction mainstays were the headline-grabbers this past year, and while they statistically form a much smaller percentage on construction accidents, when crane systems do fail, the results are devastating. Both tower and mobile crane operations and oversight are under review, as are job site practices, and the department's current permitting and inspection programs.

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