

August 2002

The Task Force held a public forum on August 13th, 2002.

Overview

On March 19, 2002 the NYC Department of Buildings convened the World Trade Center Building Code Task Force. The Task Force consists of an eleven-member executive committee and five working groups focused on structural strength, fire protection, emergency evacuation, mechanical systems, and DOB operations. Using available information and research, the working groups are reviewing current building design, construction and operating requirements to determine if modifications are needed to ensure public safety in new and existing buildings. The findings and recommendations adopted by the Executive Committee will be forwarded to the Commissioner by the end of December 2002.

Many topics and issues considered by the working groups will require extensive scientific, economic and social research. In these instances the working group will refer these concerns to the appropriate scientific or standards organization (such as the National Institute of Science and Technology). In some instances, the efficacy and viability of particular standards and requirements are known and can be recommended by the Task Force immediately. These long- and short-term areas of focus that the Task Force and its working groups are considering are outlined below.

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Specific Areas of Focus

Structural Strength

The robustness and integrity of structural elements is a significant concern for the Task Force. This working group is reviewing structural design requirements and the interrelated elements that contribute to structural robustness and redundancy in areas throughout typical buildings. Among the issues and recommendations being considered, the working group is actively evaluating the following recommendation:

- Incorporation of revised progressive collapse requirements into the NYC Building Code.

Fire Protection

Active and passive fire protection systems are a significant part of any building design. This working group is reviewing these design, construction and operating requirements to determine if they currently provide sufficient protection from the effects of fire and support subsequent attempts to control fire events. Among the

issues and recommendations being considered, the working group is actively evaluating the following recommendations:

- Retroactive installation of sprinklers in Occupancy Group E buildings over 75 feet in height within a 15 year period.
- Enhancing Fire Department emergency response communications in high-rise buildings.
- Requiring a "Critical Building Information Card" in all buildings over 75 feet in height.

Emergency Evacuation

In some instances evacuation from an area or a building is required to protect the life-safety of its occupants. Supporting efficient and effective evacuation requires designers, building operators and emergency response personnel to consider numerous physical, psychological and temporal factors. Among the issues and recommendations being considered, the working group is actively evaluating the following recommendations:

- Evacuation planning for non-fire events in buildings over 75 feet in height.
- Enhance marking of stairs and exits.
- Protection of elevator vestibules with fire rated separations in all new construction.

Mechanical Systems

Mechanical systems support and sometimes connect virtually every part of a building. These systems should support occupant safety in both normal and emergency conditions. Among the issues and recommendations being considered, the working group is actively evaluating the following recommendations:

- Controlled access to HVAC mechanical areas
- Above grade location of air intake for all new construction.

DOB Operations

Changes to DOB policy, procedures and operations will be considered to implement any of the Task Force recommendations.