



New Rule Mandates Annual Parapet Inspections for New York City Buildings

Beginning January 1, 2024, New York City building owners must undertake a yearly inspection of parapet walls, then remedy any hazardous conditions.

When did this start?

In November 2021, New York City enacted Local Law 126 of 2021, which is well-known in the building industry for establishing new requirements for [periodic parking garage inspections](#). At the same time, the legislation added a section to the NYC Administrative Code mandating periodic observation of building parapets.

To allow owners time to prepare, the City set the start date for the new parapet observations for **January 1, 2024**.

What is required?

All buildings in New York City with parapets facing a street, sidewalk, or other public right-of-way must undergo a professional parapet observation **every year**.

Unlike the [Facade Inspection Safety Program \(FISP\)](#), which excludes buildings under six stories, the parapet rule applies to all buildings, regardless of height, with the exception of detached single- or two-family homes. While FISP inspections are conducted on a five-year cycle, and parking garage inspections are required at least every six years, the newly mandated parapet observation must be done annually.

The good news: owners do not need to file the observation report with the Department of Buildings (DOB). Whereas

facade and garage inspection reports follow prescriptive formats and must be electronically submitted, parapet reports need only be kept on file by the building owner. Archives of at least six years of parapet reports must be made available should the DOB request them.

What does a parapet observation entail?

An architect, engineer, or other professional who is competent to inspect parapets must perform a close-up inspection of the entire parapet. Lifts, drops, or scaffolds are not required, as the inspection may be conducted from a fire escape or roof.

The observation must note any deficiencies, specifically:

- Whether the parapet is plumb (within a horizontal distance of 1/8 its cross-sectional thickness);
- Evidence of excessive deterioration, such as displacement, cracks, spalls, deteriorated joints, or loose / missing masonry and coping stones; and
- Stability and proper attachment of appurtenances, including railings, ladders, fire escapes, signs, and telecom equipment.

What happens if there is a hazardous condition?

Immediately upon observing an unsafe condition, the professional performing the observation is required to notify the DOB. The building owner must promptly install public



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protection, such as sidewalk sheds, fences, and/or safety netting, which must remain in place until the problem is remedied.

Unsafe conditions must be corrected within 90 days.

What is included in the observation report?

In contrast to the FISP and parking garage laws, the new parapet rule is not prescriptive as to report sections and format. However, the report does need to include:

- Basic building information, including address and owner contact details;
- Name and contact details for the professional performing the observation;
- Date of the observation;
- Location plan and construction information for the parapets, including material, height, and thickness;
- Description of general conditions;
- Unsafe conditions and actions taken to remedy them;
- Repairs since the previous report; and
- Dated photos documenting conditions.



Cracked terra cotta coping stone poses a potential hazard.



Parapet reconstruction incorporating waterproofing membrane, flashings, precast coping stones, and steel anchors.

Key Takeaways

Start date: January 1, 2024

Frequency: Annual

Covered buildings: All in NYC with parapets fronting a public right-of-way, except 1- or 2-family homes

Required: Close-up inspection of entire parapet

Inspector: Architect, engineer, or other person qualified to identify parapet hazards

Unsafe conditions: Inspector reports immediately to DOB, owner installs public protection

Time to correct unsafe conditions: 90 days

Report: Kept on file by owner for 6+ years

Rather than filing the report with the DOB, the owner retains parapet observation reports for at least six years and must be prepared to furnish them to the DOB upon request.

What steps should owners take now?

With the requirements set to begin on the first of the year, owners have just a few months to plan. If a mandated FISP inspection is scheduled for 2024, adding a separate parapet observation report to that program may be a cost-effective strategy. Similarly, parapet observation can be incorporated into other planned exterior work, such as roof rehabilitation or facade cleaning.

A design professional can offer guidance on the simplest and most budget-conscious way to meet the new annual parapet requirements as part of existing maintenance and repair programs.

Resources

[RCNY §103-15: Periodic Observation of Building Parapets](#)

[Local Law 126 of 2021](#) – see §28-301.1.1, p. 168

[“Design Guide for Parapets: Safety, Continuity, and the Building Code.”](#) Hoffmann Architects + Engineers *JOURNAL*

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Reach us at 212-789-9915 or hoffarch.com/contact.

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