



**TESTIMONY:  
Amendments to the  
NYC Plumbing Code**

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL  
COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND BUILDINGS  
NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF BUILDINGS  
MELANIE E. LA ROCCA, COMMISSIONER  
SEPTEMBER 10, 2019**

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Good morning Chair Cornegy and members of the Committee on Housing and Buildings. I am Melanie E. La Rocca, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Buildings (“the Department”). I am joined today by Gus Sirakis, my First Deputy Commissioner. Together, we are pleased to be here to offer testimony in support of the three bills before the Committee today.

Let me start by thanking the City Council for your ongoing partnership with the Department. We both strive to ensure that this great City of ours – with its over one million buildings and 45,000 active construction sites – not only has the safest built environment, but that we continue to evolve and grow New York City’s leadership in the field of design and development.

We are a Department dedicated to the safety of all people – whether they build New York City, work in New York City, live in New York City, or visit New York City. We are a Department that is dedicated to ensuring workers return home safely every single night, that tenants are safe in their homes and are not displaced by construction work, and that our customers receive the best level of service, all while strengthening our use of data for the benefit of New Yorkers.

Much has changed at the Department since the establishment of a Superintendent of Buildings, our earliest known predecessor, in 1860. The Department went from a unit within the City’s Fire Department to a Citywide Department of Buildings in 1936. We have grown – to a Department of nearly 2,000 employees – and changed throughout the years to respond to the needs of New Yorkers and the ever-evolving needs of an industry we work closely with.

However, the one thing that has remained constant throughout our many years is the presence of codes that regulate the construction of buildings, which have existed in New York City in

some form since as early as the 17th century. Since that time, our codes have been revised periodically to ensure that they are up-to-date, and that they reflect advancements in technology, as well as the latest standards for life safety.

The New York City Construction Codes (“Construction Codes”) are the backbone of New York City’s built environment. They, coupled with the New York City Zoning Resolution, which we are responsible for interpreting and enforcing, physically make New York City the place it is today.

Today, the Committee has before it, **Intro. Number 1481**, which updates the New York City Plumbing Code (“Plumbing Code”), which is part of the Construction Codes.

The Department began this Construction Code revision cycle in 2015. Our code revision process is a true labor of love on the part of our staff and committee members and represents a deep collaborative process. This public-private partnership involves over 645 industry professionals and stakeholders who volunteer their time and sit on 14 different committees, including a Managing Committee and Technical and Advisory committees, which are organized by discipline. To date, this effort has resulted in over 37,000 total hours of service, of which more than 7,000 hours were spent on just the Plumbing Code revision. Committee members include architects, engineers, attorneys, other City agencies, as well as representatives of construction, labor, real estate and other stakeholder organizations. A complete list of committee members is available on the Department’s website.

The proposed revisions to the Plumbing Code are based on the 2015 edition of the International Plumbing Code, which are developed by the International Code Council. The International Code Council is an association with over 64,000 members, which is dedicated to developing model codes, like the International Plumbing Code. All 50 States, as well as 4 U.S. territories and the District of Columbia rely on the International Code Council model codes to form the basis of their construction codes. While the proposed revisions use the International Plumbing Code as a base, they also modify or add new language to the Plumbing Code tailored to the unique needs and characteristics of the City’s built environment.

This bill makes 840 revisions to the Plumbing Code. 565 changes came directly from the International Plumbing Code, 169 changes came from the Code Revision Committees, 89

changes were a combination of both the International Plumbing Code and Code Revision Committees' input and 17 changes were more minor in nature and proposed by the Department. The bill also makes two dozen substantive revisions, which include revisions that add new or expanded requirements to the Plumbing Code. No single amendment or new proposal in this bill was included unless it was first approved by our committees and agreed upon, through consensus.

Highlights of the revisions being made to the Plumbing Code by this bill include:

- A new requirement that pipes bear all required markings, including those required by applicable reference standards, which will aid in development inspections;
- A clarification that multi-tenant facilities may share a drinking fountain, similar to shared public toilet facilities, provided that drinking fountains are available for use on each floor;
- A new requirement that each well of a multiple compartment sink discharge independently to a waste receptor, which strengthens the existing protections against cross-contamination in food handling;
- New provisions related to roof drain flow rate, which will result in a more performance based approach to drain design; and
- New provisions that limit the cutting away of a structural member during the installation or alteration of a plumbing system, which will improve the safety of the joists, studs, beams, columns or other structural members that support a building.

Before I discuss the remaining bills before the Committee, I would like to take a moment to thank the members of the Plumbing Technical Committee, the Administrative and Enforcement Advisory Committee and the Managing Committee, who contributed their expertise and countless hours to produce the bill before the Committee today.

The Department expects to submit revisions to the Energy Code later this year. Further, the Department expects to submit revisions to the balance of the Construction Codes, which includes the Administrative, Building, Fuel Gas, and Mechanical Codes, and to the Electrical Code in 2020.

Turning now to construction safety, an area of extreme importance to not only the Department, but to this Administration, and certainly to this City Council. We are strongly supportive of **Intro. Number 1661**, which would require that construction workers at certain construction sites receive relevant information regarding site safety training during required site safety orientations.

These site safety orientations are required before a worker begins work at a site and each year thereafter and are required at all construction sites where Local Law 196 construction safety training is mandated. These are sites that require that a Construction Superintendent, Site Safety Coordinator or Site Safety Manager be designated, which generally means they are New Building sites, with the exception of the construction of a 1-, 2-, or 3-family building, or that they are sites involving the full demolition of a building or the enlargement of a building.

The Department supports this bill as it will put valuable information and resources, including applicable deadlines, the types of training required and total number of hours of training required, directly into the hands of workers.

This bill will build on the efforts of many to ensure information about site safety training reaches those who need it. Since the enactment of Local Law 196, the Department has continued to perform outreach to our stakeholders. Such outreach includes:

- launching a week of action this week, which involves direct outreach to workers on construction sites in all five boroughs and an educational advertising campaign targeting construction workers, which includes advertisements on television, print media, radio and on subways;
- direct mailings to permit holders for sites where the law is applicable
- direct mailings to site safety professionals reminding them of their obligations;
- distribution of educational materials directly to construction workers;
- creating our Site Safety Construction Map, an interactive map workers can use to determine whether a job requires site safety training; and
- implementing a rule to require signage within construction sites that provide information to workers about site safety training in all languages spoken at the site.



The final bill before the Committee, **Introduction Number 1482-A**, would require that new buildings and buildings replacing glass, utilize bird-friendly glass, which is less reflective or transparent. The Department shares the Council's goal of reducing the potential for bird collisions with glass. We look forward to working with the Council, the bill's sponsors and the industry, on this proposal.

We thank the City Council for its continued support and look forward to continuing our work together to improve the Department for the benefit of all New Yorkers.

We welcome any questions you may have.

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