



New York City Comptroller
Scott M. Stringer

NEWS

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Contact: Eric Sumberg, (212) 669-3535, esumberg@comptroller.nyc.gov

New York, NY – A new [audit released today](#) by New York City Comptroller Scott M. Stringer revealed New York City’s Department of Buildings (DOB) failed to fully implement recommendations that would improve worker safety at high-rise worksites and protect New Yorkers from potential construction accidents.

“The Department of Buildings spent millions of dollars on a consultant study to find ways to improve safety at construction sites and then did not act promptly to implement most of its recommendations,” Comptroller Stringer said. “When those cranes collapsed, so too did public confidence in how those construction sites were managed. The lack of a strong government commitment to fix this problem is inexcusable.”

The audit examined whether the Department of Buildings implemented the actions recommended in a study, the High Risk Construction Oversight study (HRCO), that it commissioned in July 2008 to improve worksite safety at construction sites. Additionally, the audit sought to determine whether recommendations were implemented in the timeframes stated in by DOB in a follow up document known as the HRCO Implementation Milestones. The scope of this audit covers the period from June 2009, when the HRCO Report was issued, through December 2013.

The HRCO study was commissioned through emergency procurement procedures in July 2008. DOB paid the consulting firm CTL Engineers & Construction Technology Consultants (CTL) \$3.9 million for a study to identify hazardous conditions and find gaps in DOB’s regulatory and enforcement schemes that may contribute to accidents. In December 2009, DOB awarded a \$1.9 million to CTL to assist with the implementation of the report’s recommendations.

The study sought to examine three high-risk areas-concrete used in high-rise construction, cranes and hoists, and excavation operations. Auditors found that more than four years after preparation of the milestones document, only 8 of 65 (12 percent) safety recommendations had been fully implemented, 17 of 65 (26 percent) had been

partially implemented, 18 of 65 (28 percent) were in progress and 22 of the 65 (34 percent) had not been implemented.

“These catastrophes should have been a wake-up call, but instead, the Department of Buildings seemingly lost interest--and its sense of urgency faded,” Stringer said. “The emergency contract was issued with hopes of halting construction accidents, which skyrocketed by nearly 50 percent from FY06 to FY08. Unfortunately, we found that DOB lost momentum just when it was critical to take action and protect New Yorkers from potential danger.”

The Comptroller’s audit also revealed:

- Serious weaknesses in the department’s oversight of the way it implements safety recommendations;
- A failure to put either one person or group in charge of overseeing the process to ensure efficiency and rapid response; and
- Possible deficiencies in CTL’s performance, resulting in an overpayment of \$357,000.

“The Department of Buildings has had poor oversight of CTL and as a result, hundreds of thousands in taxpayer dollars have been wasted,” Stringer said.

The audit recommended that the City:

- Review all recommendations in the consultant’s report – to make sure they’re still relevant to the goal of increasing safety;
- Develop formal tracking and reporting procedures to ensure recommendations are, in fact, implemented;
- Create a skilled project management team to independently verify that worksite improvements are made;
- Monitor future contracts, to ensure that all tasks are completed and payments are justified;
- Maintain better records of communications with its consultant and industry members, as well as training session attendance; and
- Ensure that contracts make it clear when a consultant’s work is the property of the agency

In its response to the audit, DOB agreed with all of the Comptroller’s recommendations except one which it partially agreed with.

“With the current Administration, we have a new opportunity to take on these challenges,” Stringer said. “I look forward to working with Commissioner Chandler

on worksite safety issues throughout the five boroughs. New Yorkers who walk past construction sites have a right to know if they're truly safe – and we shouldn't have to risk another accident to find out.”

To read the full audit, please [click here](#).