



City of Philadelphia

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Friday, June 7, 2013

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CITY OF PHILADELPHIA ANNOUNCES NEW DEMOLITION STANDARDS AND INITIATIVES

Philadelphia, June 7, 2013 – Mayor Michael A. Nutter and the Department of Licenses and Inspections (L&I) announced new initiatives for demolition sites and contractors, including new standards for demolition permit issuance and demolition site inspection, new internal audit processes, and recommendations for code and regulatory changes, all designed to ensure the safety of private demolition sites throughout the City of Philadelphia.

“The City and the Department of Licenses and Inspections are dedicated to building and construction safety and to the safety of all of citizens of the City of Philadelphia,” said Mayor Nutter. “After the tragic events of this week, it is necessary to implement the same heightened controls on private demolition activity that we have on public demolitions to ensure continued safety.”

The new initiatives place additional requirements on demolition contractors and contain specific penalties for contractors who violate these requirements.

“The Department’s heightened permitting, inspection, and review requirements will ensure that all private demolition sites are safe for adjacent properties, pedestrians, and site workers,” said Department of Licenses and Inspections Commissioner Carlton Williams.

Effective immediately:

All inspectors were ordered to visit all sites with active demolition permits to proactively inspect for site safety conditions and any other possible violations.

All new permit applications for complete demolition must include the following documents and requirements prior to issuance of the permit:

1. Details on the experience and qualifications of the contractor performing the demolition including demolition experience of the owner and the company.
2. A site-safety plan detailing how the contractor proposes to protect pedestrians and adjacent properties.
3. A schedule of the demolition work. Contractor will show length of time for each stage of the project.
4. Professional Engineer’s report on adjacent property



protection for demolition of commercial buildings above three stories.

5. No active violations for contractor and review of all previous violations.

The following procedures will be implemented for demolition inspections;

1. Initial Inspections: Require the inspector to conduct a site safety review with the contractor prior to the start of work to review steps for protecting adjacent properties and pedestrians. Inspector to review schedule of work with the contractor during each inspection to ensure compliance.
2. No contact from contractor: If the required notification of the start of work is not received from the contractor, the inspector will visit the site every 15 business days from the permit's date of issuance. The permit will be revoked after 45 days if there is no evidence of legitimate work started at the permitted demolition site.
3. Failure to notify Department of start: If we find the contractor working without the required notification, the inspector will issue a Stop Work Order until a hearing is held regarding the contractor's failure and the site safety review is completed with the inspector and the contractor.
4. Complaints regarding demolition activity. The Department of L & I will investigate all complaints within a 24-48 hour period and provide a detailed report to include; the nature of the complaint, an explanation of the findings, determination of compliance, a time and date stamped photo of all site visits and inspections.
5. The Department will immediately implement a quality assurance plan, setting forth the policies and practices that ensure that all site inspections and complaints are performed timely and accurately. The procedure also establishes regular management level analysis of internal audit findings to assess the organization's overall level of conformance, with the ultimate goal of identifying and correcting areas of nonconformance and inefficiency, and engaging staff in improving processes and procedures.
6. The Department of L&I will coordinate with the Department of Revenue to ensure that all demolition contractors and/or subcontractors provide proof of the following: proper insurance and tax clearances for all employees before any building permit is approved.

The Department will issue a Code Bulletin to stipulate that demolition activities must follow similar requirements as City-funded demolitions regarding protection of adjacent buildings, i.e. no use of heavy machinery for attached building demolitions.

The Department is implementing a Construction Site Task Force with primary responsibilities of ensuring proper licensing, permitting and tax compliance of the primary contractor, subcontractor, or any independent contractors and workers related to the demolition project. Funding for this initiative has already been allocated in the FY14 budget beginning July 1, 2013.

The Construction Site Task Force will coordinate with other city agencies including the Department of Revenue, Law and the Office of the Inspector General to audit and strictly enforce all provisions related to work site safety and tax compliance in accordance with the Philadelphia Code and the Board of Labor Standards to ensure area wage rates and standards are being upheld. Any evidence of violation will lead to an immediate suspension of the permit and the project will be discontinued until the contractor and related parties fully comply.

Recommendations

1. Failure to call for inspection – implement a Stop Work Order with a \$1000 inspection fee which must be paid before work may continue.
2. Establish a separate license category for demolition contractors and allow issuance of demolition permits only to those with this license. Establish testing and experience requirements.
3. Consider imposing a code requirement for background checks and for contractors to provide random drug screening for heavy equipment operators on demolition sites as part of the site safety inspection.

4. All licensed contractors will be notified that they will be required to provide proof of experience and qualification prior to obtaining a demolition permit.

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