

MEMORANDUM

To: Tom Harmer, Town Manager
From: Allen Parsons, AICP
Director, Planning, Zoning & Building Department
Report date: September 13, 2021
Meeting date: September 21, 2021
Subject: Update Regarding Multi-Story Structures Safety and Recertification

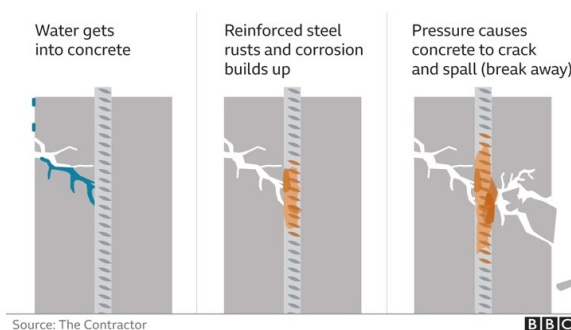
Recommended Action

None, informational only.

Background

Immediately following the June 24, 2021 tragic building collapse of the Champlain Towers South in Surfside, Florida, the Town sent out a message to condominium boards, managers and residents that while there were not answers as to the causes of the building's collapse, that those devastating circumstances could provide a constructive prompt to encourage assessment of the structural integrity of older, multi-story buildings here in the Town to ensure the safety of residents and visitors.

While the exact causes of the Surfside building collapse are still being evaluated¹, there are a number of factors that can impact a building's structural integrity over time, that are relevant to the Town. Buildings on or near the ocean are especially vulnerable because they are constantly exposed to increased effects of saltwater oxidation and corrosion, as well as minor concrete and masonry cracks. Stucco left exposed to the elements can cause rebar to expand up to seven times its original size, exerting a force of 10,000 pounds per square-inch (see image below). This condition, commonly referred to as spalling, can necessitate extremely expensive concrete restoration and, if not addressed, can potentially result in structural damage, or failure.



¹ Investigators with the National Institute of Standards and Technology are still in the early days of examining the building's collapse, with ongoing examinations of the integrity of the foundations and the strength of the materials used to support the building. The investigation will also include a review of how the building was designed and constructed, including the building's modifications.

Hundreds of thousands of dollars can be saved in building repair costs alone by following a regular maintenance schedule, applying early detection methods, and practicing aggressive prevention techniques.

The Surfside tragedy highlighted the importance of keeping up with building maintenance, and underlined the role that local governments can play to prompt both building inspections and follow-up on identified deficiencies. Miami-Dade and Broward Counties, and their jurisdictions, have Building Safety Inspection Programs that require structural and electrical safety inspections for buildings 40 years old, or older and every 10 years thereafter. Broward County's program was created in 2005. It was modeled after Miami-Dade County's program, which was originally established in 1975 following a partial building collapse that resulted in the deaths of seven DEA agents in 1974.

The programs generally call for buildings over 3 stories in height to be inspected by State licensed architects and engineers, which are hired by private building owners to perform the safety inspections. The inspections include a list of specific items that are required to be investigated and documented, with a focus on determining the general structural condition of the building. There is also an electrical recertification to confirm those components of the building is safe for continued use.

The programs are administered by city or county building departments, which maintain the Safety Inspections prepared by an engineer or architect. In the event that repairs are necessary, the owner has 180 days from the date of the building inspection report to correct any structural and electrical deficiencies that pose an immediate threat to life safety. Repairs that are incidental and nonlife threatening can be completed at a later date.

In the wake of the Surfside tragedy there have been calls for mandating reinspection programs Statewide and with reinspection periods shorter than the 40-year initial period. A Florida Bar Task Force has been formed and has been convening with engineers, insurance industry professionals, condominium managers and other experts. They are preparing to make recommendations to the Governor and legislators ahead of the January State Legislative Session. Estimates from the Task Force indicate that there are more than 912,000 condominium units in Florida, estimated to be older than 30 years.

As it appears that a Statewide reinspection program requirement may be taken up in the next legislative session, staff will follow this to see if the Florida Legislature acts. If the Legislature does not institute a Statewide reinspection program, staff would recommend the Town Commission consider a local program.

In the meantime, staff believes there is an opportunity for condominiums to utilize the Town's electronic permitting system as a repository of documentation regarding inspections and maintenance that has been done. The Town will also be reaching out to multi-story condominiums and provide checklists for both structural and electrical recertification (draft Checklists attached). Based on data from each county's Property Appraiser, the inventory of Town buildings greater than 3-stories, and that are at least 40-years old, is 62 buildings (41 in the Sarasota County portion of the Town and 21 in the Manatee County portion). Staff will report back on legislative efforts regarding

development of Statewide reinspection program requirements. Should efforts at the State level not move forward, staff would recommend consideration of development of a Building Safety Inspection program for the Town of Longboat Key.

Staff Recommendation

None, informational only.

Attachments

Town of Longboat Building Checklists (Available in Town Clerk's Office)

End of Agenda Item