



CITY RELEASES INVESTIGATION REPORT INTO 2023 BRONX BUILDING COLLAPSE

New Enforcement Actions Taken Against Contractor

Department of Buildings Staffing Up New Proactive Enforcement Unit Focused On Preventing Dangerous Collapses

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New York, NY – Buildings Commissioner Jimmy Oddo announced today the release of the city’s investigation report into a major structural collapse that occurred at 1915 Billingsley Terrace, in the Morris Heights section of the Bronx on December 11, 2023. The comprehensive 48-page report is the result of an extensive multi-agency investigation conducted in close coordination with the NYC Department of Investigation, and is being made available online in the interest of public transparency. The investigation found that the collapse was primarily caused by the unsafe removal of a load-bearing masonry pier on the northeast corner of the building that was holding up the corner of the building, performed by contractors who failed to install temporary structural shoring prior to the removal of the load-bearing masonry pier. This reckless action was performed because the engineer of record associated with the project failed in his critical duty of identifying the load-bearing nature of the pier. While thankfully no one was seriously injured in the collapse, it did result in the long-term displacement of dozens of families. As a result of our investigation, the Department has taken enforcement actions against the engineer of record and the general contractor for their failure to safeguard the public from construction activity at this building.

[Read the Investigation Report](#)

“As we close the chapter on the building collapse at 1915 Billingsley Terrace, we are strengthening our city with a focus on prevention,” said **Deputy Mayor for Operations Meera Joshi**. “With over one million buildings in New York City, we can’t be everywhere at once. But we can identify derelict buildings and unsafe contractors that require additional, proactive inspections. Thank you to City Council for supporting the Department of Buildings in this effort to ensure that every New Yorker is safe not only where they lay their heads but on the sidewalk, where they go about their days.”

“This investigation report was the product of extensive work from city investigators, showing in plain detail the devastating consequences of making mistakes in this industry,” said **DOB Commissioner Jimmy Oddo**. “The bottom line is that licensed construction professionals are supposed to know how to safely repair a building, and failure to implement proper safeguards when removing structural elements of a building shows an unacceptable lapse in judgement. Thanks to extensive collaboration with our partners across government, we were able to not only get to the bottom of exactly what specific failures led to this building collapse, but we are also implementing a new plan to prevent similar incidents like this from happening in the future.”

“Correctly identifying load-bearing structures is critical work, and where a professional engineer fails to identify such structures on repair plans, workers performing repairs may do so in an unsafe manner, putting their own safety, and the safety of the public, at risk. As the City Department of Building’s report reveals, the professional engineer’s failures led to the collapse at Billingsley Terrace in the Bronx in 2023. Thankfully no one was injured, but the collapse displaced over 100 residents from their homes. DOI was pleased to work with the DOB on this investigation, which has exposed the professional engineer and general contractor’s disregard for the safety and wellbeing of New Yorkers,” said **DOI Commissioner Jocelyn E. Strauber**.

“New Yorkers deserve to both be and feel safe in their homes, yet the partial collapse at 1915 Billingsley Terrace last year shook New Yorkers’ trust in our homes, the professionals entrusted by our regulatory agencies to make repairs, and our city’s protocols to ensure our safety,” said **Council Member Pierina Sanchez, Chair of the Committee on Housing and Buildings**. “I remain thankful no lives were lost and applaud the Department of Buildings and Investigations for taking this investigation seriously, issuing violations and license suspensions, and working collaboratively on Local Law 79 of 2024, the Billingsley Terrace Structural Integrity Act—a momentous change in how the Department of Buildings will now handle structural safety in NYC buildings. Local Law 79 moves the agency from a reactive approach to a proactive one, and with \$4.7M in accompanying investments to increase inspectorial capacity, it will help keep New Yorkers safer. No amount of discipline or new laws will return the peace that 1915 residents lost on December 11th, yet we are making strides in making NYC safer for all.”

Directly following the major collapse at this building, DOB safety inspectors and structural engineers were quickly routed to the scene, where they immediately launched an investigation into the cause of the incident. This investigation included a thorough analysis of historical building records, dozens of field visits at the collapsed structure, evaluation of the building debris, multiple witness interviews, and a review of available surveillance videos. As a result of this investigation, it was determined that façade repair drawings prepared by Professional Engineer Richard Koenigsberg failed to identify this masonry pier as load-bearing on the plans, and failed to direct the contractors to install temporary structural shoring prior to the start repair work on this load-bearing masonry pier. Workers at the site employed by Arsh Landmark General Construction Corp.

followed the defective engineering plans and were directed to demolish the load-bearing masonry pier at the cellar.

On December 11th, the day of the collapse work to remove the masonry pier was performed with the assistance of an electric chipper gun and hand tools. The demolition work reduced the structural strength of the load-bearing masonry pier to the point where it could no longer support the weight of the floors above. The overstressed load-bearing masonry pier buckled, which led to the collapse of the masonry façade and the entire corner above. During interviews with employees of Arsh Landmark General Construction Corp. conducted by investigators from DOB and DOI directly after the collapse, the workers claimed that no work on the load-bearing masonry pier was conducted that day. These claims were directly contradicted by surveillance video which shows that not only were workers removing bricks from the load-bearing masonry pier under the direct supervision of the permit holder, but also that the masonry pier buckled while they were performing this work, followed by the collapse just minutes afterwards.

DOB has previously taken enforcement actions against Richard Koenigsberg, the Professional Engineer responsible for drawing up the repair plans, [including a two-year suspension of his ability to conduct façade inspections](#) in New York City. In addition, DOB referred this case to the Office of Professional Discipline at the New York State Education Department. They are currently reviewing this case and may take additional enforcement actions related to the license of Mr. Koenigsberg.

As a result of our investigation, DOB has also issued two violations to Arsh Landmark General Construction Corp for their failure to safeguard the construction site and their failure to properly notify the Department of the damage at this building prior to the collapse. Violation hearings have been scheduled at the Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings (OATH), where the contractor could face a maximum potential penalty of \$50,000.

To prevent similar incidents like this from happening in the future, the Department is creating a new proactive enforcement unit focused on inspecting buildings that have been allowed to fall into disrepair by negligent owners and bad actors within the construction industry. Thanks to a new law passed by the City Council, and a significant investment of \$4.7 million dollars from Mayor Eric Adams, the Department is currently staffing up this new unit, who will use predictive analytics to identify derelict buildings and unsafe contractors, in order to take appropriate interventions in the interest of public safety before a major collapse occurs. In addition, the Department will be conducting educational outreach to the construction industry with details about this incident. This outreach will include a construction advisory to the contractors, construction workers and other licensed professionals about the importance of properly identifying load-bearing elements of a building and implementing appropriate safeguards prior to the start of demolition work.

In recent years, the Department has implemented multiple initiatives to improve safety on building construction work sites. These initiatives include mandatory safety training

for workers on larger construction sites, enhanced in-person supervision requirements for site safety professionals, proactive unannounced field inspections by agency inspectors, and a commitment to education outreach. These efforts have helped make New York City building construction sites safer, with a 50% decrease in construction work site fatalities between 2019 (14) and 2023 (7). The trend for safer construction work sites has continued in 2024, with a 26% decrease in incidents and a 28% decrease in worker injuries in the first three quarters of this year, compared to the first three quarters of 2023.

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