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COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT 1

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF NEW YORK

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TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

November 20, 2018  
Start: 1:06 p.m.  
Recess: 1:40 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 Broadway-Committee Rm, 14<sup>th</sup> Fl.

B E F O R E: JOSEPH C. BORELLI  
Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:  
ALICKA AMPRY-SAMUEL  
JUSTIN L. BRANNAN  
FERNANDO CABRERA  
ALAN N. MAISEL

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A P P E A R A N C E S (CONTINUED)

Anthony DeVita  
Assistant Chief of Operations for the New York  
City Fire Department

Julian Bazel  
Code Counsel for the New York City Fire  
Department

Louis Cendagorta  
Chief Inspector in the Bureau of Fire Prevention

Melissa Barbour  
Mechanical Contractors Association of New York,  
Inc.

Patrick Dolan  
President of Steamfitters Local 638

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[gavel]

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Any luck? Now it's working. Well good afternoon everyone, Council Member Joe Borelli, Chair of the Committee on Fire and Emergency Management. I want to thank the public for attending today's hearing and I'd also like to acknowledge the Committee Members who are here; Council Member Ampry-Samuel and Council Member Cabrera who's already left, who's already... you know just found it necessary to be somewhere else not very nice of him. Regarding the subject of today's hearing, the Committee will conduct oversight related to the impact of automatic sprinkler systems on fire suppression in New York City. In addition to the oversight portion of the hearing we will hear Introduction 826, what seeks to amend the New York City Administrative Code to require the FDNY to report on the use of fire sprinklers in fire related deaths. During today's oversight portion of the hearing, we want to know how automatic sprinklers are regulated by the FDNY including the agency's take on the necessity and efficiency of such systems as well as the process for inspections. As our city has seen a robust increase in real estate development over the

1  
2 past decade, we want to examine the Department's  
3 process of inspecting the growing number of sprinkler  
4 systems both old and new that are located throughout  
5 our great and ever expansive city. Additionally, we  
6 want to make sure that our cities bravest continue  
7 having the resources they need to protect the public.  
8 Furthermore, the Committee wants to explore the scope  
9 and frequency of sprinkler inspections as well as  
10 discuss whether any additional training is given to  
11 probationary firefighters regarding the enforcement  
12 of fire code sprinkler requirements as well as what  
13 enhanced training is given to veteran firefighters  
14 and fire officers. In addition to the oversight  
15 portion of the hearing, we'll hear 826, which I  
16 discussed earlier in my opening remarks. We  
17 anticipate the Department will provide testimony on  
18 this legislation allowing us to gain a better  
19 understanding of their position on the proposed  
20 reporting requirements. I would now like to ask those  
21 members of the administration who plan on testifying  
22 to please state your name for the record and to raise  
23 the... your right hand as the Committee Counsel  
24 administers the oath.  
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ANTHONY DEVITA: Anthony... this is Chief Anthony DeVita.

JULIAN BAZEL: Julien Bazel, Fire Code Counsel.

LOUIS CENDAGORTA: Chief Inspector Lewis Cendagorta.

COMMITTEE CLERK: Do you affirm to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth in your testimony before this Committee and to answer honestly to Council Member questions?

JULIAN BAZEL: I do.

LOUIS CENDAGORTA: I do.

ANTHONY DEVITA: I do.

COMMITTEE CLERK: Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you guys. By the way who writes this, is, is this all you? Will you give me a little bit more... maybe a little bit more literary tools, you know to make it more spicy next time. Gentlemen please.

ANTHONY DEVITA: Good afternoon Chair Borelli and all of the Council Members present. My name is Anthony DeVita and I am Assistant Chief of Fire Operations for the New York City Fire Department. I'm joined today by Julian Bazel, Code

1  
2 Counsel for the Fire Department and Louis Cendagorta,  
3 Chief Inspector in the Bureau of Fire Prevention.

4 Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today  
5 about the impact of automatic sprinkler systems on  
6 our fire... on fire suppression. Sprinklers are an  
7 important, highly effective tool in suppression.

8 Automatic sprinkler systems have the ability to  
9 control an incipient fire and provide precious time  
10 for occupants of the building to escape and for the  
11 Fire Department to arrive before the fire spreads.

12 Put simply, the presence of a working sprinkler  
13 system helps us save lives and property from fire.

14 The positive impact of sprinklers on deaths and  
15 injuries in a fire is profound. This can be  
16 demonstrated by looking at data from fires in  
17 locations with sprinklers versus locations without.

18 According to research published by the National Fire  
19 Protection Association, the NFPA, in structural fires  
20 during the time period 2010 to 2014, the civilian  
21 fire death rate in fires in properties with  
22 sprinklers was 80 percent... 87 percent lower than the  
23 rate of civilian fire deaths in properties without an  
24 automatic sprinkler system. The civilian injury rate  
25 in fires on properties with sprinklers over this same

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2 time period was 27 percent lower than the injury rate  
3 in properties with no sprinkler systems. The NFPA  
4 points out that many of these injuries occurred in  
5 fires that were too small to activate the sprinkler or  
6 the initial... in the initial moments of the fire  
7 before the sprinkler operated. The impact of  
8 sprinklers on the safety of first responders is also  
9 significant. According to the same NFPA research, the  
10 average fire fighter fireground injury rate in  
11 locations with sprinklers was 67 percent lower than  
12 the injury rate in locations where no automatic  
13 sprinkler system was present. As members of the New  
14 York City Fire Department, we are not experts on the  
15 cost of sprinkler installations and we would defer to  
16 our fellow city agencies regarding those figures.  
17 However, as a potentially useful reference, we are  
18 aware that a report on Home, Home Fire Sprinkler Cost  
19 Assessment conducted by Newport Partners for the NFPA  
20 in 2013 noted that the median cost was \$1.22 per  
21 square foot and also that these costs have been  
22 decreasing over time. The Council may wish to explore  
23 this topic further with local partners in order to  
24 understand the specific dynamics of the New York City  
25 market, but it is worth noting that the costs for

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this valuable tool are not exorbitant. From the standpoint of safety and fire suppression, expanding the use of automatic sprinkler systems in the city of New York would be a positive step to take. We are aware that other factors such as cost and the burden of new construction figure into the conversation. We also know that our fellow city agencies such as the Department of Buildings and the Department of Housing Preservation and Development would have valuable contributions to this discussion. We'd be happy to work with the Council and our agency partners on this topic. I'll now briefly address the legislation being considered today, Introduction 826. Introduction 826 sponsored by Council Member Brannan would require the Fire Department to include information on the usage of fire... usage of fire sprinklers in its annual report on civilian fire deaths. The legislation would require the yearly report to address for each fire the following; whether a sprinkler was found, the age and type of the sprinkler, testing and maintenance of records, testing and maintenance records and whether such sprinkler was operational and activated during the incident. If this bill passed the Department would be able to comply with most aspects of this

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legislation. However, we would like to clarify for the Council that, while the Fire Department personnel do witness periodic testing of sprinkler systems, building owners are responsible for the more frequent routine tests and maintenance of sprinkler and standpipe systems and the owners maintain such records. The Department would also not be able to include such data in our report... the Department would also not be able to include such data in our report. Also, depending on the incident, there is often a practical difficulty to determining the age and type of sprinkler. However, due to the degree that it is practical to make a determination in the course of a given fire investigation, we could include in the annual report whether a sprinkler was present, the age and type and whether such sprinkler was operational and activated during the incident. Okay, we would be happy to take any questions at this time.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you very much Assistant Chief. Before I ask any questions, I want to acknowledge, and I don't want to alarm anyone, but we've been joined by Council Member Alan, the, the madman Maisel... [cross-talk]

1 COMMITTEE ON FIRE AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

2 COUNCIL MEMBER MAISEL: Why would I alarm  
3 anyone... [cross-talk]

4 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Just you know I, I  
5 don't want anyone to, to get upset so... thank you for  
6 coming. Can, can you just take us through in... just in  
7 a nutshell in, in laymen's terms what, what generally  
8 would trigger the, the need for sprinklers, what,  
9 what... is, is it a building height, is it the building  
10 age, is it the street width, what are some of the  
11 regulations?

12 JULIAN BAZEL: Yeah, first of all  
13 sprinklers are required as... by... based on the type of  
14 occupancy and this is in the New York City Building  
15 Code not in the Fire Code. Most building types of a  
16 certain size are required to have sprinklers whether  
17 they be assembly, factory, residential, office, all  
18 different types the building code now covers. The one  
19 large occupancy group that is not currently covered  
20 would be one- and two-family homes and even some of  
21 those are covered if they get to a certain size.  
22 Additionally, the building code also regulates  
23 buildings... all high-rise buildings these days are  
24 sprinklered, high rises above six stories or 75 feet.  
25 In addition, the... both the building code and the fire

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2 code requires sprinklers depending on certain  
3 businesses or activities that may be going on, if  
4 your storage... storing large quantities of hazardous  
5 materials or if your cooking systems, various kinds  
6 of equipment you may need to have a fire suppression  
7 system for that equipment.

8 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Are there building  
9 types or, or use types, use groups that you would  
10 prefer sprinklers be installed in that are not  
11 currently installed or... by, by law not installed?

12 JULIAN BAZEL: Well I think its fair to  
13 say the Fire Department is in favor of sprinklers as  
14 a general principle in, in all occupancy groups.  
15 Obviously, there are serious practical considerations  
16 we're aware of and in terms of cost. I should point  
17 out that what I'm... just referred to are the current  
18 building code requirements, the requirements that may  
19 have been in effect since 2008 or in some cases back  
20 to 1968 building code and in some cases all the way  
21 back to the early years in factories but there are  
22 many existing buildings that don't have sprinklers  
23 and yes, in general the Fire Department thinks it  
24 would be a good idea in the long term for buildings  
25 to be sprinklered.

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2 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Are there any  
3 sprinkler requirements being considered as part of  
4 the fire code revision?

5 JULIAN BAZEL: As I indicated the  
6 requirement for a sprinkler based on occupancy would  
7 be in the building code and its... [cross-talk]

8 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Okay... [cross-talk]]

9 JULIAN BAZEL: ...a building code revision  
10 issue.

11 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Is there anything  
12 in the international fire code that addresses this  
13 that...

14 JULIAN BAZEL: Well there's a couple of  
15 things... there's a couple of things. First of all, the  
16 international building code, international fire code  
17 does require sprinklers in one- and two-family  
18 dwellings. Additionally, there's something called the  
19 international existing building code which the New  
20 York City is... the Department of Buildings is in the  
21 process of studying and, and, and considering for  
22 adoption. That code attempts to address when to  
23 require that buildings brought up be brought up to  
24 current code requirements including sprinkler  
25 requirements in existing buildings, it's a rather

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complicated issue because of both cost and, and design considerations. Right now, the New York City Building Code the primary key to bringing buildings up to code is based on the cost of the alteration so it's, it's usually very... you know gut renovations or very substantial alterations would require that existing buildings be brought up to code. In some instances, there are specific compliance deadlines such as for office buildings, all office buildings are supposed to be retrofitted with sprinklers by 2019 I believe but in general this is complicated issue and the international fire code does have provisions for it.

CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So, for smaller one- and two-family homes how do we define substandard streets that trigger the need for sprinklers?

JULIAN BAZEL: Okay, so this was a concept that was introduced in the 2008 fire code which we based on the international fire code with some New York City amendments, the, the basic idea is that in New York City there are... there are model standards... there are standards for model streets, they typically are 50 or 60 foot wide easements and

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2 when they use that term they include the sidewalks.  
3 So, the, the typical 50... if you were building a  
4 brand-new road in a... in a sort of as of right you  
5 would typically have a 34, 34-foot-wide roadway with  
6 18... I'm sorry, eight foot sidewalks on each side  
7 which would make a 50 foot easement and some... wider  
8 areas if you were building a, a, a boulevard it might  
9 be even wider so we... well in, in the 19... 2006 code we  
10 took the, the, the wider 60 foot easement, in the  
11 2014 we scaled it back so basically right now we  
12 operate from the basic principle that a, a full  
13 roadway should be 34 foot wide and that would allow  
14 parking on both sides and that... we use... now there are  
15 situations we recognize in, in smaller communities  
16 or, or, or smaller developments where we would bring  
17 it down to 30 foot but basically the idea is and we  
18 learned this through somewhat bitter experience in  
19 Staten Island and other places of the city is that  
20 when you don't provide adequate roadways, if you say  
21 well we'll provide a narrower roadway but there's no  
22 parking, there's never enough parking for people and  
23 people will end up parking in places where they're  
24 not supposed to park and when there's parking in... on  
25 streets that are designated for no parking it does

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2 make it more difficult for the Fire Department to get  
3 through especially when people then double park or...  
4 and do things of that sort. So, in general our code  
5 works from the basic concept that we want to have a  
6 30-foot, foot... 34-foot-wide roadway now with parking.  
7 Now if we don't have that the code requires that in  
8 certain circumstances if you're altering a building  
9 or putting a new building in, we want that building  
10 to be sprinklered even if the building code doesn't  
11 require it to be sprinklered and that's typically  
12 one- and two-family homes.

13 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Just turning to the  
14 inspection of, of systems so I... so, just... I know you  
15 said this, how many FDNY inspections are required per  
16 year versus how many private owner inspections?

17 [off mic dialogue]

18 LOUIS CENDAGORTA: Yes, one and two  
19 family are not required to be witnessed whether it's  
20 testing or inspections by the FDNY, there is a  
21 section in the fire code it says that it's the  
22 owner's responsibility to make that sprinkler system  
23 in perfect working order. When we start talking about  
24 three families and, and up, four families there's  
25 different types of testing but basically you will see

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1  
2 a fire inspector once every five years at that  
3 premise to witness some type of testing on the  
4 building depending on the occupancy and the type of  
5 system because there's different types of... [cross-  
6 talk]

7 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: And then how, how,  
8 how often are the owners required to in, in like say  
9 a three-family building?

10 LOUIS CENDAGORTA: Well if it's a three-  
11 family building, they don't have to follow the NFPA  
12 25 standard, they could do the old standard which is  
13 monthly record keeping so once a month someone has to  
14 do a visual inspection of the sprinkler system.

15 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: As far as the, the  
16 inspections on a five year... five-year repeating cycle  
17 is there a backlog on inspections and... [cross-talk]

18 LOUIS CENDAGORTA: No, we have a, a  
19 rotating list that obviously something that's not due  
20 today is due tomorrow and we do book the appointments  
21 so it's... everyday we keep on adding maybe 150  
22 appointments a day so it's a... it's a rotating  
23 schedule... [cross-talk]

24 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: And how many... how  
25 many inspectors conduct sprinkler inspections?

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2 LOUIS CENDAGORTA: I have 41 right now.

3 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: And they all have a  
4 license, don't you have to be a licensed inspector?

5 LOUIS CENDAGORTA: Its either a master  
6 fire suppression piping contractor A or B license or  
7 a master plumber.

8 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Okay and how often  
9 as a percentage are sprinkler systems found to be  
10 nonfunctioning at perfect levels?

11 LOUIS CENDAGORTA: Very low, I don't have  
12 the numbers, but it is very low.

13 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: So, in your opinion  
14 if, if a sprinkler system is properly installed it,  
15 its, its not likely to fail for, for no reason?

16 LOUIS CENDAGORTA: Correct.

17 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Okay. Is there any  
18 evidence for... you know regarding the effectiveness,  
19 is there any national evidence regarding the  
20 effectiveness of sprinklers versus a non-sprinkler  
21 building?

22 LOUIS CENDAGORTA: Yeah, Chief.

23 ANTHONY DEVITA: The... right in the... in my  
24 opening remarks as far as the injury and, and  
25 fatality rates are considerably less in, in

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2 structures with, with a sprinkler system present and,  
3 and operating. So, yes... the answer is yes that there  
4 is a marked decrease in injury and, and fatalities  
5 when a... an operating sprinkler system is, is present.

6 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: And is there any  
7 coordination between the FDNY and DOB regarding the  
8 installation and inspections of sprinkler systems?

9 JULIAN BAZEL: Well the DOB is  
10 responsible for the installation, approval of the  
11 installation and the acceptance of the installation  
12 through whatever procedures are provided in the  
13 building code. Once the system is legally installed  
14 and approved the Fire Department takes over and  
15 conducts its periodic inspection of, of the flow  
16 testing or other type of testing.

17 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Do, do you think  
18 NYCHA buildings should be sprinkled or, or should  
19 they be left as is, the ones that aren't?

20 JULIAN BAZEL: Well I think as I said  
21 before the Fire Department is generally in favor of  
22 sprinklers in, in, in every building but we recognize  
23 that there are significant costs and practical  
24 considerations of retrofitting building that... you  
25 know many buildings may not have... they don't have

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2 drop ceilings, they don't have shafts so actually  
3 putting one in can become quite costly.

4 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Council Member  
5 Ampry-Samuel.

6 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: I was going  
7 to ask a question about the NYCHA buildings but, but...  
8 just for point of clarification, when you talked  
9 about the requirements under the fire codes for  
10 multiple dwelling buildings and you said under the  
11 one and two family dwellings it just depends on the  
12 size, what I've been seeing is a lot of homes that  
13 have been converted like in our brownstones within  
14 the community that used to be three family and now,  
15 you know folks are paying two million dollars and now  
16 they're just one family so can you describe like  
17 what... in what instances are one and two family  
18 dwellings depending on the size included in the fire  
19 codes and if the example I gave is one of them?

20 JULIAN BAZEL: Well it's a little  
21 complicated, its mostly in the building code.  
22 Generally speaking existing one and two families do  
23 not have to be sprinklered, if you change the use of  
24 occupancy from a one and two family to a multiple  
25 dwelling, a three family or more you do have to...

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2 under the building code you have to sprinkler it.  
3 The... when you're restoring a building back to a  
4 single family you may not have to maintain the  
5 sprinklers, but you would have to apply to remove  
6 them if you decide to do it. Right now, the building  
7 code only requires sprinklers of one and two families  
8 if they are above three stories or in a row house,  
9 I'm not quite sure exactly but it's not your typical  
10 single family detached home. Now the fire code we got  
11 involved in requiring sprinklers in one and two  
12 families because of the substandard width street. So,  
13 if you are an existing home on a substandard width  
14 street, a narrow street we don't require you to do  
15 anything however if you alter your home and you put  
16 on a large addition or you raise the roof under  
17 certain circumstances we want you to sprinkler the  
18 building basically if you're ripping open the, the  
19 walls and the ceilings and you know it, it would be  
20 appropriate for you to put in a sprinkler system at  
21 that time but basically in general right now if  
22 you're building a small home on a standard width  
23 street you... the building code would not require that  
24 you sprinkler it.

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2 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: You know  
3 what let me just ask one more... okay. Yesterday I had  
4 a meeting with an organization, a company that has a  
5 contract with NYCHA to do all of the fire safety with  
6 Johnston Controls they have a 50 million contract  
7 with NYCHA to do all the fire safety upgrades  
8 throughout the developments, have you... are you  
9 working at all in collaboration with NYCHA in this  
10 contract and do you know if the upgrades to the fire  
11 and safety codes include any of the sprinkler  
12 systems?

13 JULIAN BAZEL: I'm not personally  
14 involved in that, I'm not sure if we're aware of what  
15 you're referring to at, at this time, we may be... the  
16 Fire Department may be, but I don't think we're aware  
17 of that...

18 ANTHONY DEVITA: No, I, I... [cross-talk]

19 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay...  
20 [cross-talk]

21 ANTHONY DEVITA: ...have any information on  
22 that right now but I could follow up.

23 COUNCIL MEMBER AMPRY-SAMUEL: Okay, thank  
24 you.

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2 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you, I just  
3 have one, one last question, in terms of the use of  
4 sprinklers in conjunction with other fire suppressive  
5 measures whether it be retardant walls or, or doors,  
6 I mean do you think it's enough to have those other  
7 measures or will sprinklers add to the overall safety  
8 of the building, another words is, is it fair to say  
9 that if we have some retardant walls and some door  
10 suppression or something like that we don't need the  
11 sprinklers?

12 ANTHONY DEVITA: Well the fire, fire  
13 retardant walls and, and fire doors... well the purpose  
14 they serve is to keep the fire and whatever products  
15 of combustion within that area but the, the benefit  
16 of the sprinkler in that same space will, will knock  
17 down a, a fire in its insipient stages so the fire  
18 doesn't have... get a chance to get past those, those  
19 enclosures or those, those walls or those fire, fire  
20 doors so the sprinkler is... would be definitely, you  
21 know something we'd want to see in addition to any  
22 other fire safety measures that are, you know  
23 structural or partitions or, or, or doors so that  
24 basically it will knock the fire down before it, it

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2 takes, takes control of more that... then just that  
3 area.

4 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Gentlemen I just  
5 want to say thank you and may, may your turkeys not  
6 set off any suppressive sprinkler systems this  
7 thanksgiving, thank you.

8 ANTHONY DEVITA: Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Next panel... [cross-  
10 talk]

11 JULIAN BAZEL: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: I'd like to call up  
13 Melissa Barbour and Patrick Dolan. And if there's  
14 anyone else who'd like to testify just fill out one  
15 of these, hand them to the lovely Sergeant at Arms..

16 [off mic dialogue]

17 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you.

18 MELISSA BARBOUR: Hi, good afternoon  
19 Chair Borelli and members of the Council Committee on  
20 Fire and Emergency Management. My name is Melissa  
21 Barbour and I'm with the Mechanical Contractors  
22 Association of New York. MCA is comprised of 130-  
23 member firms including the New York Fire Sprinkler  
24 Council who employs Steamfitters Local 638. MCA  
25 represents licensed contractors that are responsible

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2 for the installation, inspection, testing and  
3 maintenance of fire suppression systems in tens of  
4 thousands of high density residential, commercial and  
5 industrial buildings including hospitals,  
6 universities, power plants and water treatment  
7 facilities all across the New York region. We  
8 represent the most competent, informed and highly  
9 skilled contractors in New York City and Long Island  
10 and regularly provide internal and external  
11 educational seminars for programs for our members  
12 that further the lifesaving message and the  
13 importance of proper fire protection. I'm here today  
14 to discuss the importance of fire sprinklers and to  
15 testify in favor of Intro 826. Research and data  
16 support the fact that fire sprinklers save lives and  
17 prevent property damage thereby preventing  
18 displacement. However, the city of New York has not  
19 passed significant fire sprinkler legislation for  
20 residential buildings since 1999. Yet, residential  
21 buildings... fires continue to plague the city and  
22 particularly older buildings, including the majority  
23 of New York City Housing Authority Apartments that  
24 are not required to install sprinklers if built prior  
25 to 1999. These are often the buildings where the most

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2 vulnerable, vulnerable populations live. According to  
3 the FDNY 2017 annual report, there were a total of  
4 3,279 accidental fires, 1,075 people injured, and 73  
5 lives lost last year. Just this year in the Bronx we  
6 faced the deadliest fire the city has seen in 27  
7 years, which killed 12 people, injured 14 and  
8 displaced 22 families. We can and must do more to  
9 prevent tragedies like this from happening. Aside  
10 from firefighting and explosion, explosion  
11 fatalities, there has never been a multiple loss of  
12 life in a fully sprinklered building due to fire or  
13 smoke. The death rate per 1,000 is 87 percent lower  
14 in properties with sprinklers than in properties with  
15 no automatic extinguishing systems. Smoke detectors  
16 are not enough to save lives or prevent property  
17 damage. And when a fire begins in a sprinklered  
18 building, only the sprinklers closest to the fire go  
19 off to contain the fire area and completely put out  
20 the fire preventing displacement and saving families  
21 money, money and ultimately also saving money for the  
22 city of New York. All too often displacement is left  
23 out of the larger conversation on fire prevention.  
24 The common misperception... misconception is that the  
25 sole purpose of fire sprinklers is to give more time

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2 to escape fire. However, the fact is fire sprinklers  
3 control 99 percent of fires. In properties with fire  
4 sprinklers, flame damage was confined to the room of  
5 origin 97 percent of the time. And according to an  
6 NFPA study, from 2007 to 2011, fires in high rise  
7 buildings cost 219 million dollars in property damage  
8 each year. Sprinklers are cost effective and  
9 retrofitting high rise buildings is easier because  
10 buildings 75 feet or higher in New York City already  
11 have standpipes on each floor that the FDNY connects  
12 to. These standpipes provide the infrastructure to  
13 accommodate fire sprinklers. At the same time owners  
14 and residents of high-rise buildings with fire  
15 sprinklers receive discounts on their fire insurance.  
16 For all these reasons, the New York Fire Sprinkler  
17 Council urges our elected officials, city agencies  
18 and all authorities having jurisdiction to consider  
19 mandating fire protection.. fire sprinkler protection  
20 in occupancies where they are not currently required.  
21 Just as important, we also urge New York City  
22 jurisdictions to ensure that the fire sprinkler and  
23 standpipe systems currently installed in their  
24 locales are properly inspected, tested and  
25 maintained. I'd like to thank Council Member Justin

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2 Brannan for introducing 826, which requires the Fire  
3 Department to report on the use of fire sprinklers in  
4 fire related deaths. We do not currently have New  
5 York City specific data and therefore this  
6 legislation would help capture the impact of fire  
7 sprinklers on fires in New York City and also allow  
8 lawmakers to make informed policy and decisions based  
9 on this data. While we support the Intro, we'd like  
10 to see the reporting provision period lengthened  
11 from, from 2022 so that we have sufficient time to...  
12 for the period to study. We believe that extending  
13 the reporting period, this legislation will be  
14 critical to prevent future fires by helping to learn  
15 from past mistakes and the MCA supports all attempts  
16 to promote fire safety in New York City. Thank you  
17 for your time today.

18 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you, Patrick  
19 please.

20 PATRICK DOLAN: Good afternoon Council  
21 Member Borelli and other members of this important  
22 committee. My name is Patrick Dolan and I am  
23 President of the Steamfitters Local 638 representing  
24 8,500 men and women. Our members install and maintain  
25 the fire sprinklers, pipes, heating and cooling

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1  
2 systems that act as the circulatory system for tens  
3 of thousands of buildings in New York City and  
4 throughout Long Island. Because of that I can tell  
5 you firsthand how crucially important fire sprinklers  
6 are in saving lives and containing the damage from  
7 fires. Those facts will become even more clear if  
8 this bill is enacted and we are given more  
9 information about the role of sprinklers and fires.  
10 Hopefully, as a result of this increased transparency  
11 the city will be compelled to further action in  
12 increasing the requirements for fire sprinklers. What  
13 do we know about this; according to a study by the  
14 National Fire Protection Association, the death rate  
15 per 1,000 fires was 87 percent lower in properties  
16 with fire sprinklers and fire damage was confined to  
17 the room of the origin in 97 percent of fires where  
18 sprinklers were present. Fire sprinklers are the  
19 first line of defense and with the increasing use of  
20 highly flammable building materials and furnishings,  
21 which causes modern fires to burn 800 percent than  
22 they did 40 years ago, sprinklers are more essential  
23 than ever. They are among the most effective means we  
24 have of mitigating the tragic results of fire and we  
25 must continue working to ensure that these residents

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2 and workers in all buildings in New York City are  
3 afforded that vital protection. Over the decades, we  
4 have worked with the City Council to add and  
5 strengthen sprinkler requirements for buildings. This  
6 work has led directly to a long and persistent  
7 decline in fire deaths. Since the first fire high  
8 rise sprinkler law was enacted in 1973, fire  
9 fatalities have steadily dropped, from about 300 a  
10 year in the 1970's down to a record low of 48 in 2016  
11 and staying well below 100 per year for the past  
12 decade. This did not happen by an accident. It is the  
13 result of sustained advocacy, increasing knowledge of  
14 the effectiveness of sprinklers and most important,  
15 legislation that repeatedly expanded the required use  
16 of sprinklers. This bill before you is another step  
17 on the journey towards universal fire sprinkler  
18 protections in New York City buildings. Thank you for  
19 the opportunity to speak to this today.

20 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Thank you. I have...  
21 I have one question, I'm not sure who wants to answer  
22 it. The cost of installing a sprinkler system do you  
23 have a rough estimate of the cost per square foot in  
24 a building that already has standpipes on each floor  
25

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2 versus a building that's not? Either, either of you  
3 guys can... [cross-talk]

4 PATRICK DOLAN: I would... it would...  
5 between... I mean my... we work for the, the contractors  
6 of the MCA, I... the... a contractor would be able to  
7 give you that answer.

8 MELISSA BARBOUR: I could definitely do  
9 some research on that and... [cross-talk]

10 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Uh-huh... [cross-  
11 talk]

12 MELISSA BARBOUR: ...see, I mean I've  
13 looked at Chicago has a voluntary retrofit right now  
14 of existing high rise and they were coming out around  
15 four dollars a square foot but it, it really is also...  
16 [cross-talk]

17 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Do, do you know if  
18 those buildings were stand piped already?

19 MELISSA BARBOUR: Yes.

20 CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Okay.

21 MELISSA BARBOUR: But it's... I think that,  
22 you know it is going to depend on the building type,  
23 the age, the... but you know we'd be happy to, to work  
24 on some of those figures and get some estimates for  
25 the Council if that would be helpful.

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CHAIRPERSON BORELLI: Okay, thank you  
guys very much, appreciate it. Is there anyone else  
who would like to come and speak and talk about this  
bill or anything, I mean for that matter we can...  
thank you, this adjourns the meeting.

[gavel]

C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date

November 30, 2018