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**Committee on Housing and Buildings**

Hon. Pierina Sanchez, Chair

**June 1, 2022**

**Oversight: Agency Enforcement and the Twin Parks Fire**

**Proposed Int. No. 208-A:** By Council Members Williams, Hudson, Salamanca, Feliz, Riley, Stevens, Holden, Dinowitz, Hanif, Farías, Louis, Velázquez, Avilés, Schulman, Menin, Narcisse, Restler, Barron, Krishnan, Joseph, Gutiérrez, Ayala, Jordan, Hanks, Nurse, Abreu and Gennaro

**Title:** A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to inspections of self-closing doors in residential buildings

**Administrative Code:** Adds sections 15-141, 27-2041.2 and 27-2046.5

1. **Introduction**

On June 1, 2022, the Committee on Housing and Buildings, chaired by Council Member Pierina Sanchez, will hold a hearing on Proposed Int. No. 208-A, in relation to inspections of self-closing doors in residential buildings. This bill was first heard on April 6, 2022. More information about this bill along with the materials for that hearing can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/yc733x3d>.

1. **Background**

*January 2022 Residential Building Fires*

On January 9, 2022, a high-rise residential fire at the 19-story Twin Parks North West apartment building in the Fordham section of the Bronx resulted in the deaths of 17 individuals, including eight children.[[1]](#footnote-1) Dozens were hospitalized with life-threatening injuries due to smoke inhalation.[[2]](#footnote-2) Investigators determined the fire was caused by a defective space heater that caught fire in a resident’s bedroom.[[3]](#footnote-3) The space heater had reportedly been running continuously for days to supplement the inadequate heat provided by the building. Although the flames were contained primarily to the hallway outside the third floor apartment unit where the fire originated, smoke from the fire quickly inundated the building.[[4]](#footnote-4) As residents of the building evacuated, the door to the third floor apartment from which the fire originated reportedly remained open, causing smoke to permeate throughout the building.[[5]](#footnote-5) The smoke was drawn into a stairwell, leading up to the fifteenth floor, where the stairwell door was also left open.[[6]](#footnote-6) All individuals killed in the fire died from smoke inhalation. Additionally, dozens of residents were displaced from their apartments. It was reported that between 2013 and 2019, HPD inspectors cited the Twin Parks building six times for failure to maintain self-closing doors, all of which had been resolved.[[7]](#footnote-7) Of those violations, doors on the third and fifteenth floors had specifically been mentioned.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Closing doors when escaping a fire can greatly decrease the chance that such fire will spread to other areas of a building. The Twin Parks fire, and other high-rise fires, have demonstrated the fatal results of open doors allowing fires to spread into common hallways, stairways and other apartments. Recognizing the potential life-or-death impact of closing doors during a fire, the Council enacted legislation aimed to address this issue following a string of deadly fires in early 2018.

First, Local Law 111 of 2018, established requirements that doors providing access to interior corridors or stairs be self-closing or equipped with devices to ensure closing after having been opened. This requirement, which applied to occupancy groups R-1 and R-2 established July 31, 2021 as a deadline for compliance with such requirements.[[9]](#footnote-9) The bill placed responsibility on building owners of multiple dwellings to keep and maintain self-closing doors in good repair, and made failure to keep or maintain such doors a class C immediate hazardous violation, with a 21-day period of correction following issuance of violation.[[10]](#footnote-10)

Additionally, Local Law 115 of 2018, required the posting of notices within residential buildings regarding the importance of closing doors when escaping a fire. This requirement, codified in Admin. Code. Section 15-135, places responsibility on building owners to ensure such notices are maintained in conspicuous locations.[[11]](#footnote-11)

**Legislation**

Below is a brief summary of the legislation being heard by the Committee at this hearing. These summaries are intended for informational purposes only and does not substitute for legal counsel. For more detailed information, you should review the full text of the bills, which are attached below.

**Int. No. 208-A, A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to inspections of self-closing doors and fire safety notices in residential buildings**

This bill would require the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) to establish rules to select 300 multiple dwellings, in consultation with the Fire Department (FDNY), to be inspected for self-closing door compliance. It would require HPD to submit an annual report with information about these inspections. This bill would also require HPD to provide information to FDNY regarding fire safety violations dating back to 2017, which FDNY must audit to inform its building inspection program.

This legislation would take effect immediately after becoming law.

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| Proposed Int. No. 208-A    By Council Members Williams, Hudson, Salamanca, Feliz, Riley, Stevens, Holden, Dinowitz, Hanif, Farías, Louis, Velázquez, Avilés, Schulman, Menin, Narcisse, Restler, Barron, Krishnan, Joseph, Gutiérrez, Ayala, Richardson Jordan, Hanks, Nurse, Abreu and Gennaro    A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to inspections of self-closing doors and fire safety notices in residential buildings    Be it enacted by the Council as follows:    Section 1. Article 11 of subchapter 2 of chapter 2 of title 27 of the administrative code of the city of New York is amended by adding new sections 27-2041.2 and 27-2046.5 to read as follows:  § 27-2041.2 Self-closing doors; required inspections. a. General. The department shall develop a process, to be implemented by July 1, 2023, to periodically inspect certain self-closing doors in class A multiple dwellings in accordance with this section.  b. Multiple dwellings to be inspected. The department shall establish by rule criteria for annually selecting 300 class A multiple dwellings to be inspected pursuant to this section. Such criteria shall include, but need not be limited to, buildings identified in consultation with the fire department. Notwithstanding the criteria established by the department, the annual selection of multiple dwellings to be inspected pursuant to this section shall not include any building that: (i) is currently the subject of a court order appointing or a proceeding brought by the department seeking the appointment of an administrator pursuant to article 7-A of the real property actions and proceedings law, or (ii) has been included in the alternative enforcement program pursuant to section 27-2153 and has not been discharged from such program. Any multiple dwelling inspected under this section shall not be subject to inspection under this section again for at least five years.  c. Inspection process. Self-closing doors shall be inspected and tested in accordance with this section and applicable rules of the department promulgated pursuant to this section. The commissioner shall develop criteria to be used during the inspection of a self-closing door.  d. Inspection requirements. At each inspection conducted pursuant to subdivision c of this section, the department shall inspect self-closing doors in common areas, public spaces, hallways and corridors and reasonably accessible self-closing dwelling unit doors.  e. Annual report on self-closing doors. 1. No later than September 30, 2024, for the period of the prior fiscal year, and annually thereafter, the commissioner shall submit to the mayor and the speaker of the council and shall post conspicuously on the department’s website a report regarding self-closing doors inspected by the department pursuant to this section.  2. The report shall include a table in which each separate row references a building inspected by the department pursuant to this section in the previous year. Each such row shall include the following information, as well as any additional information the commissioner deems appropriate, set forth in separate columns:  (a) The address of the building where such inspection was attempted;  (b) The building or property owner at the time of inspection;  (c) The date on which an inspection of such building occurred;  (d) The number of floors contained in such building;  (e) Whether or not the building was accessed;  (f) The number of self-closing door violations issued as a result of the inspection; and  (g) The number of self-closing door violations that were corrected by the owner.  § 27-2046.5 Inter-agency coordination on fire safety violations. a. By July 1, 2022, the department shall provide the fire department with access to records of all fire safety violations issued by the department on or after January 1, 2017.  b. By July 1, 2022, the department shall develop and implement a process, to be followed in the course of the department’s normal procedures while conducting inspections within dwelling units for violations of this chapter, to check for compliance with the posting requirements related to building fire and emergency preparedness information set forth in item 1 of subparagraph A of paragraph 5 of subdivision e of section 401-06 of title 3 of the rules of the city of New York or any successor provision. If the department finds that an owner has failed to comply with such requirements, the department shall notify such owner and the fire department of such failure.  § 2. Title 15 of the administrative code of the city of New York is amended by adding a new section 15-141 to read as follows:  § 15-141 Fire safety violations. a. The department shall review and audit records of fire safety violations provided to it by the department of housing preservation and development pursuant to section 27-2046.5.  The results of this audit shall be used to inform the department’s building inspection program.                       § 3. This local law takes effect immediately.      CP/AS  LS #7053/7055/7058/7298/7299/7863  5/25/22 10:31 PM |

1. Ashley Southall et al., *19 Killed in New York City’s Deadliest Fire in Decades*, The New York Times (Jan. 9, 2022) <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/09/nyregion/nyc-bronx-fire.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Id.* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Bronx Fire: Mayor Revises Number Killed to 17, Including 8 Children*, The New York Times (Jan. 10, 2022) <https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/01/10/nyregion/bronx-fire-nyc> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Nicholas Fandos, *Two Open Doors Created ‘Flue Effect’ of Deadly Smoke at Bronx High-Rise*, The New York Times (Jan. 10, 2022) <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/10/nyregion/bronx-apartment-fire-smoke.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Supra*, note 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *Id.* [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *Id.* [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Nolan Hicks and Jack Morphet, *City repeatedly flagged busted fire doors before Bronx tower inferno*, The New York Post (Jan. 10, 2022) <https://nypost.com/2022/01/10/city-repeatedly-flagged-busted-fire-doors-before-bronx-tower-inferno/> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Admin. Code §28-315.10 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Admin. Code §27-2041.1 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Admin. Code §15-135 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)