



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PRESS RELEASE

Fire Chief and DBI Director Urge Building Owners to Inspect Balconies and Decks Immediately; Life-Safety Lesson from Berkeley Student Tragedy

SAN FRANCISCO – In the wake of the collapse of a balcony in Berkeley that resulted in the tragic loss of young lives, DBI Director Tom Hui and Fire Chief Joanne Hayes-White today announced that both City Departments with life-safety responsibilities are initiating immediately a notification to the owners of all multi-unit apartment buildings with three or more units to remind them to inspect all balconies and decks to check for possible structural weaknesses that may result over time from water-intrusion, dry rot and other possible degradation factors.

“DBI Plan Checkers and Inspectors are now and will continue to be aggressive and insistent upon local and State code compliance requirements with respect to any building’s life-safety systems,” said Tom Hui, S.E., C.B.O. and DBI Director. “Problems can occur, however, if a building owner fails to provide adequate structural maintenance. Please visit the DBI web site for more information.

<http://sfdbi.org/decksafety>

“That is why the City passed an ordinance in 2002,” Hui added, “that requires all wood and metal decks, balconies, landings, exit corridors, stairway systems, guardrails, handrails, fire escapes, or any parts of these systems in weather-exposed areas of apartment buildings and hotels to be inspected by a licensed general contractor, or a structural pest control licensee, or a licensed professional architect or engineer. Property owners are required to provide proof of compliance with this ordinance – Section 604 in the San Francisco Housing Code – by submitting a signed affidavit by the responsible inspector to DBI’s Housing Inspection Services every five years.”

“Mayor Lee has instructed both the Fire Department and DBI to reach out immediately to property owners,” said Chief Hayes-White, “and to remind them of their responsibilities to maintain all building life-safety systems in good working order. Following the tragic losses earlier this week from the balcony collapse in Berkeley, we want building owners and managers of multiple-unit buildings, where many of our residents live, to act immediately in re-checking their buildings’ life-safety systems. This kind of proactive inspection action may reveal accidents just waiting to happen – and provide immediate opportunities to prevent any collapse of a structurally compromised balcony or deck in our City, and thus prevent potential injuries and save lives,” the Chief concluded.



Notifications are being sent to all multi-unit apartment building owners, with both Housing and Fire Inspectors also conducting spot-checks in coming weeks to ensure that code-compliance requirements are, in fact, being met.

DBI is the Charter-mandated building safety agency responsible for overseeing the effective, efficient, fair and safe enforcement of the City and County of San Francisco's building, housing, plumbing, electrical, mechanical, and disability access codes for San Francisco's more than 200,000 commercial and residential buildings.

The mission of the SFFD is to protect the lives and property of the people of San Francisco from fires, natural disasters, and hazardous materials incidents; and to save lives by providing emergency medical services; to prevent fires through prevention and education programs.

The SFFD is chartered with enforcing all applicable laws pertaining to the protection from, and the prevention, suppression, control and investigation of fires. This extends to the inspection of all occupied or vacated structures to determine compliance with applicable laws relative to fire prevention, protection and control.

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