

JOSE HUIZAR COUNCILMEMBER, 14TH DISTRICT

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Mayor, Councilmember & LAFD Announce Elimination of Flat Roof Requirements on High Rise Buildings

Mayor Garcetti, Councilmember Huizar, and LAFD Chief Terrazas reform LAFD policy to make helipad-landing flat roof high-rises a thing of the past, allowing for more iconic architecture to enhance Los Angeles' skyline while implementing cutting-edge fire-life safety measures and systems in modern high-rise buildings

LOS ANGELES (September 29, 2014) – Mayor Eric Garcetti and Councilmember José Huizar joined the Los Angeles Fire Department today to announce a historic revision to LAFD's Regulation No. 10 to eliminate helipads from the roofs of new high rise buildings. The new policy will allow architects to create the kind of iconic pitched-roof building designs seen in other world-class cities while meeting the highest standards for fire-life safety.

High rise buildings in Los Angeles have been required to have helipads since 1974. However, standards, technology, and best practices in engineering, fire-life safety, and design have evolved and modernized significantly over the past half-century. L.A. is the only American city with this requirement which limited design and made it impossible for architects to design the narrow tops and grand spires that distinguish many skyscrapers across the globe.

"Los Angeles is the creative capital of the world, but our skyline is full of buildings that are uniformly flat," said Mayor Garcetti. "We want better fire protection and better design from our buildings. We must always be innovating, and that's what this policy does."

Mayor Garcetti convened a working group with Councilmember Huizar, LAFD, and other departments to address the outdated policy after Councilmember Huizar worked on an earlier revision which allowed a modified helipad in lieu of a full-size helipad on the Wilshire Grand project. The Wilshire Grand will be the tallest building west of Chicago and the first in Los Angeles to implement a modified helipad.

"While an iconic Downtown Los Angeles skyline is something we all look forward to seeing, the most important thing about this policy is fire-life safety and the protection of our citizens and firefighters is still paramount and at the forefront of Regulation 10," said Councilmember Huizar. "After decades of drab, flat-roof designs, the skyscrapers of tomorrow will be bold, unique and imaginative, matching the City of Los Angeles well-earned reputation as the creative capital of the world."

The working group consisted of LAFD and LADBS officials, engineers, architects, and fire-life safety experts. They worked with the Mayor's and Huizar's offices to provide alternatives that will allow building designs to either implement a modified helipad or eliminate the helipad altogether by employing a series of modern fire-life safety measures and systems.

Under the revised Regulation No. 10, a building taller than 420 feet and shorter than 1,000 feet can eliminate the helipad requirements by installing a fire service access elevator or an exit stair in addition to the required elevators and stairs; two stairways with roof access; enclosed elevator lobbies; and power-operated automatic shutters for escalator openings or stairways separate from the egress (exit) system. Additionally, the installation of automatic sprinkler systems throughout the high rise building would be required, as well as a video camera surveillance system with cameras located in all fire service access elevator lobbies and on every fifth-floor landing in exit stairway shafts. Egress stairways with a specific calculated capacity would also be required.

These are similar to standards used in other cities in California and throughout the world and represent the cutting edge of fire-life safety.

"The new design options for high-rise buildings will allow for innovation and technology to transform the Los Angeles skyline while simultaneously strengthening the life-safety protections of these new structures," said Los Angeles Fire Department Chief Ralph Terrazas. "We will leverage today's technology and design features to build the safest buildings in the world."

Andrew Thul is a Fire Protection Engineer with Cosentini Associates and was part of the working group.

"The update to the regulation and accomplishments of this group are a testimony to the progressive approach Mayor Garcetti, Councilmember Huizar, LAFD, LADBS, and community partners are taking to support development in the City of Los Angeles while maintaining life-safety for first responders and building occupants," said Thul. "It is an exciting time for Los Angeles."

Of the 1,700 high-rises in the State of California, approximately 745 are located in Los Angeles. These range from hotels and apartment buildings to commercial office towers.

With more than 25 million visitors coming to Los Angeles annually, a more iconic Downtown skyline could only help tourism, one of our city's largest revenue-generating industries.

"I envision these policies will bring about a dramatic revision to the city skyline - an opportunity for world class artistic expression, not just a flat canvas anymore but a vibrant, world class, modern mix of culture, art, and state of the art life-safety measures," said Bruce Miller of Bruce A Miller and Associates. "This is possible because of the hard work of a team of dedicated professionals from the Mayor's and Councilmember's offices, the Los Angeles Fire Department, LADBS, and the development industry who worked together as a team to bring about this momentous change in the regulatory codes without compromising the life-safety of the first responders. This will allow for the artist (architects) and the developers to create a masterpiece worthy of additional world recognition."

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