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The critical role of timely NYC special inspections in successful project delivery



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In New York City's complex and tightly regulated construction environment, delivering a successful project involves not only great design and efficient execution, but rigorous compliance with building codes and inspection requirements as well. One of the most critical components of this compliance is the special inspection process mandated by the NYC Building Code.

Far from being mere formalities, special inspections are essential quality control checkpoints in the construction process. When properly scheduled and executed, they safeguard the safety, integrity, and compliance of a project. Timely inspections are not just best practice – they are vital to maintaining project momentum, preventing costly reworks, and securing the all-important Certificate of Occupancy (CO).

What Are NYC Special Inspections?

Special inspections are third-party reviews conducted by qualified inspectors independent of the contractor. They are designated by the registered design professional

of record and are required for construction activities that affect building systems and components.

These inspections are not optional – they are required by law. However, their value is real in ensuring construction is performed to the standards needed to protect both occupants and the long-term performance of NYC buildings.

The Risks of Insufficient Inspection Scheduling

Most developers and contractors understand that special inspections are required – but some underestimate the importance of timing. Unsuccessfully coordinated inspections can lead to a domino effect of issues:

- **Inaccessible work:** If steel connections are covered before being inspected, finishes may need to be removed – often during off-hours or after occupancy – at added cost.

- **Water damage:** Improper pressure testing can lead to leaks that damage installed finishes or millwork.

- **Fire safety risks:** Uninspected penetrations can compromise fire-rated assemblies, endangering adjacent tenants.

- **Budget blowouts:** Failed or missed inspections may require rework, added labor, and material costs – not to mention disruption across multiple trades.

- **Permitting delays:** Projects cannot pass final Department of Buildings (DOB) inspections without completed special inspections, holding up Temporary or Final COs.

- **Liability exposure:** Developers, GCs, and the special inspector can face liability if defects arise from unverified work.

With all the unexpected challenges that can arise during a project, special inspections don't need to be one of them. Issues like these are avoidable when taking the right precautions and being proactive in the inspection process.

Make Special Inspections Part of the Plan

The most successful project teams treat special inspections as a critical element throughout the process, and not just as a checklist item. This approach starts early and requires continuous coordination. Here's how to do it:

- 1. Plan Early:** Before construction begins, the GC should collaborate with the design team and special inspection agency to confirm all required inspections and map them to their construction activities. Inspection milestones ought to be incorporated into their master schedule.

- 2. Educate the Trades:** The GC should coordinate with each subcontractor to not just understand their

scope but also the inspections tied to their work. For instance, masonry contractors need to plan around mortar and grout inspections, while mechanical teams must prepare for energy and pressure tests.

- 3. Leverage Technology:** Project management tools like Procore, PlanGrid, or Smartsheet can track inspection requirements and deadlines. These platforms reduce human error and ensure transparency across the team.

- 4. Hold Regular Coordination Meetings:** Include inspection tracking in regular site meetings. This keeps it on everyone's radar and allows the team to resolve potential conflicts before they result in delays.

Don't Let Inspections Derail the Final Push

As projects near completion, the pressure to secure a Temporary or Final CO intensifies. This can be when teams discover missing items. To prevent this:

- Loop inspection agencies into punch list walks, so they can identify and close out outstanding items.

- Verify that all inspection reports have been submitted and accepted by all necessary parties.

- Coordinate closely with expeditors and supers to reconcile final filings in advance of DOB inspections.

Make Special Inspections Work for You

In NYC's high-stakes development landscape, special inspections are more than just a code requirement – they are a cornerstone to risk management and project success. Proactive scheduling, early coordination, and diligent follow-through can mean the difference between a smooth handoff and an expensive delay.

By integrating special inspections into the construction schedule and treating inspection agencies as strategic partners, developers and construction managers can reduce risk and improve quality – all while safeguarding on-time project delivery, managing the budget, and staying fully compliant. This is where the right special inspection agency can make all the difference; AMAA consistently ranks as one of the most widely used special inspection agencies in NYC year over year. The best way to take special inspections seriously is to choose an agency that takes them seriously, and AMAA is the top choice when it comes to working proactively with your team to ensure successful compliance and smooth project delivery.

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