



NEWS FROM

CITY CONTROLLER LAURA CHICK

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CHICK FINDS CITY'S BUILDING AND SAFETY DEPARTMENT LAX IN ENFORCEMENT

Has Made Customer Service The Priority Over Public Safety

Los Angeles— In a hard hitting and extensive audit of the Department of Building and Safety, City Controller Laura Chick has cited 13 problem areas and issued 33 recommendations for improvement.

“My audit is clear, the Department of Building and Safety has some real deficiencies in its enforcement of building safety laws, supervision and quality of inspections, and consistency and effectiveness of enforcement,” said Chick.

“Along with the Los Angeles Police and Fire Departments, Building and Safety is one of the most important City agencies in maintaining public safety. During the last several years the Department of Building and Safety has focused more on improving customer services rather than maintaining public safety. The Department has made customer service a priority over public safety, and that’s just wrong,” continued Chick.

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Chick

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“My audit found serious violators like those with a building or wall in danger of collapse, were not always quick to fix the problem. The Department’s emphasis on voluntary compliance and uneven enforcement have proved ineffective,” said Chick.

Among the audit’s findings:

- The Department lacks consistent and compelling code enforcement methods to encourage compliance by long-term code violators
- The Department has a significant number of backlogged inspections that are required by State law or City Code including those for elevators and seismic shut-off valves.
- The Department’s oversight of its inspectors is not adequate to ensure quality of inspections
- The Department does not have adequate procedures to follow-up on expired permits, temporary Certificates of Occupancy and outstanding code violations.

“Building and Safety has been successful in achieving many customer service goals, but the larger question is: Are standards being sacrificed for quantity over quality. Now is the time for the Mayor and City Council, working with the Department, to decide what kind of code enforcement agency this City needs,” said Chick.

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