

Legislation at a Glance

Proposal 17: Remove Barriers to Backup & Natural Gas Generators

Implemented

Local Law 111 of 2013

Summary

NYC requires essential building systems such as fire safety, lighting and elevators to be equipped with backup power so they can continue to function during a power outage. Previously, buildings that voluntarily provided backup generators were required to supply power for at least one elevator in addition to whatever other loads the buildings wanted to power. This increased generator size and costs, making backup generators too expensive for some buildings. Strict startup time requirements discouraged the use of natural gas generators, which are clean burning and can power buildings for extended periods without fuel deliveries.

Local Law 111 makes it easier for buildings to install voluntary backup power. It expands the number of residential buildings that are permitted to use smaller, less expensive backup generators, by establishing that only multifamily buildings over 125 feet tall are required to power an elevator. All other buildings must power an elevator only if they are over 75 feet tall. By relaxing the startup time requirement for some systems, the legislation allows more compliant models of natural gas generators, making it easier to use natural gas.

Finally, the law allows fuel cells as a power source.

New Requirements or Changes

Effective: December 2, 2013

Amendments to Section 2702.4 of the NYC Building Code:

An existing building that adds a generator voluntarily must provide power for emergency lighting and fire alarm systems. It only must provide power to an elevator if it is a multifamily residential building over 125 feet, or any other building over 75 feet.

NYC Administrative Code, Section 27-3025, amending Sections 700.1, 700.4, 700.5, 700.6, and articles 701 and 702 of the 2008 National Electrical Code:

Natural gas is allowed as a fuel source for standby generators in all buildings and for emergency generators in R-2 multifamily occupancies. Fuel cells are now allowed as a power source for standby systems in all buildings and for required emergency systems only in multifamily residential buildings.

Required standby power systems (NEC Section 701) are restored to the NYC Electrical Code, joining the existing categories of required emergency and optional standby systems. Previously, required standby systems were reclassified as emergency systems with more stringent requirements. The requirements for required standby systems closely match those for emergency systems, including methods for acceptance, installation, maintenance and operational testing. Fuel (excepting natural gas) must be stored on-site for six hours of full-demand operation of the system.

Amendments to Sections 402.12, 403.10, 403.11, 404.6, 405.9, 405.10.1, and 414.5.4 of the NYC Building Code:

Standby and emergency systems are both required for high-rise buildings and underground buildings, though a single emergency system may be used to meet both requirements. Power for fire systems must be provided from the emergency power system. Other building systems may be provided power from the standby power system.

Only multifamily residential buildings taller than 125 feet must power an elevator.

Amendments to Section 909.11, 909.20.6.2, 1007.4, 1007.5, 1008.1.3.3, and 1707.7 of the NYC Building Code:

Various modifications have been made to adjust the code for the restored category of required standby systems.

Enforcement

The Department of Buildings will enforce these requirements as part of its normal permitting and inspection process.

Implementation Notes

There are no known issues with fulfilling the requirements of this legislation.