



BY MAHESH KHAITAN | OCTOBER 1, 2019

Building safety: How developers can ensure the safety of workers and residents

We look at some of the basic minimum safety procedures that developers should follow in their projects, to ensure the safety of residents, as well as construction workers

With the demand for residential and commercial properties growing constantly, the number of developers offering remarkable structures, to attract potential buyers, is also growing. However, physical safety of residents is a pre-requisite to the well-being and developers have an important role to play, in delivering a safer atmosphere, both, in terms of commercial, as well as residential buildings.

With the increase in demand and a variety of features being offered by developers today, safety standards must also be given equal importance. Safety in construction activity is regulated by the National Building Code (NBC), which provides a set of guidelines that comprises of administrative regulations, general building requirements, development control rules, fire safety systems, structural design and construction and stipulations regarding materials, building and plumbing services.

In case of any structure failing to comply with the Code, the developer will be punished and in certain cases, cancellation of the approval or demolition of the building, may take place. Some of the necessary safety measures to be undertaken are:

- Elevator to be provided, for buildings having a height of more than 13 metres.
- Emergency exits to be provided to ensure safe evacuation, in the case of any fire.
- Two exit doorways to be provided, for a floor accommodating more than 20 persons.
- At least one staircase to be provided, as a fire exit staircase.
- Various floors to have pipelines, booster pumps and water tanks.
- A minimum height of handrail in the staircase is required, in all buildings.
- All balconies overlooking any exterior or interior open space that are 2 metres or more, below, to have parapet walls or guardrails.
- Plumbing work, which includes drinking water, sewer or toilet facilities systems, are to be provided, as well as safe methods to avoid accidents and spread of diseases.
- Buildings that are partially or fully covered by unbroken metallic surfaces, will help in avoiding lightning, keeping the occupants safe.

Other necessary/pertinent approvals that need to be obtained, include an NOC (no-objection certificate) from the Pollution Control Board, NOC from the fire department, electricity, clearance from the explosives authority, RERA compliance, etc.

Safety and health measures to be taken by developers, for workers

Every developer should ensure that his/her employees are exposed to a safe work environment. It is mandatory for a developer with more than 50 workers, to issue a policy statement with respect to the safety and health of his/her workers and ensure that the said policies are followed. Usually, it is the Building and Other Constructions Workers (BOCW) Act that regulates and provides assistance to workers engaged in construction activities. The BOCW Act lays down health, safety and well-being measures pertinent to construction workers. In view of that, developers should:

- Ensure safe means of access to any construction site, by providing suitable and sufficient protective equipment like helmets, eyewear, footwear, gloves, ladders, etc., to workers.
- Take necessary precautions when demolishing a building, in order to avoid any collapse of the building.
- Ensure suitable and adequate lighting, when lifting and lowering loads.
- Take precautions to prevent inhalation of dust, during cleaning or related work,
- Ensure limited weights are lifted or moved by workers.
- Provide medical facilities to construction workers on site.

Construction safety and the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act (RERA)

While the RERA has no definite section devoted to construction safety, there are certain rules that ensure safety standards are met, during construction. A builder can start a project's construction and sale, only after he/she has obtained all statutory approvals. In addition, the original plans or structural design and specifications of the building cannot be changed, unless the developer get the consent of two-thirds of the customers.

The way ahead

The primary goal for the construction industry, should be to reduce accidents, injuries and deaths, while maintaining appropriate safety standards. This is easily possible, by following safety codes, in addition to using quality materials.

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