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Latest Crane Accident Reveals Unresolved Construction Safety Crisis

Statement by Assembly Member Micah Z. Kellner

“Yesterday’s crane collapse at 333 East 91st Street, in my district, reveals that the Department of Buildings has yet to address the ongoing construction safety crisis. I am outraged that we are left once again to grapple with what appears to be the preventable death of a construction worker and the serious injury of at least three Upper East Side residents.

“I have reviewed the Department of Building’s public records for 333 East 91st Street and I am angry to discover that twenty-three complaints were made by New Yorkers who called 311 to express their concern about this worksite since the construction permit was first granted last year. Two of these complaints were made less than two weeks ago, and specifically addressed concerns about the safety of the crane. As recently as just two days ago, the Department of Buildings was at this worksite issuing violations but found no problems with the physical structure of the crane. The complaints are listed as “Resolved” by the Department of Buildings – but yesterday’s unsettling events revealed that something was seriously wrong.

“The City of New York constantly reminds its citizens, “If you see something, say something.” Twenty-three New Yorkers did their civic duty, but their government failed them.

“Safety at a construction site should be the top priority of not only the construction company, but also the Department of Buildings. Yesterday, the Mayor promised an investigation of this incident. I believe decisive and immediate action is necessary.

“My colleague, Assembly Member Joe Lentol, will soon be introducing a bill to split the Department of Buildings into two separate departments – so that the people that approve a project and those that are responsible for issuing buildings violations are not the same. I will be a sponsor and strong supporter of this legislation. New Yorkers are rightfully suspicious of Buildings Inspectors. For too long, the proverbial fox has been guarding the chicken coop. It’s far past time to change the way the City does business so that safety and enforcement become higher priorities.”

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