



# 40-Year Building Recertification Program



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**W**hen people reach the age of 50, their primary care physician will recommend a colonoscopy to check the condition of their digestive system. When buildings reach the age of 40, Miami-Dade and Broward Counties require a similar check-up to determine the condition of the structural and electrical systems. This building check-up is the “40 Year Building Safety Inspection Program” conducted by Miami-Dade and Broward Counties to ensure safety of older buildings. Similar to the colonoscopy, if any unsafe



Cooling tower steel support beam

conditions are discovered during the building check-up, repairs must be made to keep the building safe. Again similar to the colonoscopy, subsequent Building Safety Inspections are required every 10 years. The bad news is that you must do it; however, the good news is that the 40 Year Building Recertification is not nearly as unpleasant as a colonoscopy if your building is well maintained.

At the present time, Miami-Dade and Broward are the only counties in Florida that have implemented a 40 Year Building Safety Inspection Program. The Miami-Dade program was established in the mid-1970s in response to a partial building collapse that caused several deaths. Broward's program became effective in 2006. The purpose of the program is to minimize the possibility of future building failure and be better prepared for hurricane-force winds. One- and two-family dwellings and buildings fewer than 2,000 square feet in Miami-Dade and 3,500 square feet in Broward are exempt from the program.

The process is straightforward:

- The building department sends a notification to the building owner.
- The building owner has 90 days to furnish the required Safety Inspection Report prepared by a licensed engineer or architect to the building official.
- In the event repairs are necessary, the building owner has 180 days from the date of the report to correct the deficiencies that pose an immediate threat to life safety.

Since not all repairs can be made within the 180-day time limit, the building department will usually grant an extension if the building is actively engaged in the repair process. However, penalties and fines exist for buildings that do not comply with the program requirements.

The Broward County program states the following:

"This inspection is for the sole purpose of identifying structural and electrical deficiencies of the building or structure that pose an immediate threat to life safety or where failure of critical components is imminent. This inspection is not to determine if the condition of an existing building is in compliance with the current edition of the Florida Existing Building Code or the National Electrical Code."

Although subject to interpretation, the statement appears clear that the purpose of the inspection to identify dangerous conditions that affect life safety or building component failure but not current code-compliance, cosmetic, or maintenance issues. The statement does not require apartment-by-apartment inspection, and conversations with building officials have confirmed that random sampling of apartments is satisfactory.

Forty Year Building Recertifications must be performed by a licensed engineer or architect qualified by training and experience in the specific technical field involved in the inspection and report. The report must be signed and sealed by the certifying engineer or architect. The report must indicate the manner and type of inspection forming the basis of the report and description of any conditions needing repair. Photos should be included in the report to assist readers in visualizing the areas inspected and the conditions described.

Both Miami-Dade and Broward Counties provide a Building Safety Inspection Report form for both structural and electrical. The first page of both forms contains the building basics and inspection firm information:

- Address
- Owner
- Square footage
- Number of stories



- Steel Framing Systems
- Concrete Framing Systems
- Windows
- Wood Framing
- Exterior Finishes

The inspector is required to provide a description of the system, general condition, and any defective condition that needs repair. Nearly all South Florida high-rise condominiums are reinforced concrete; very few condominium buildings have a structural steel frame. As you might guess, the most common defective condition that needs repair is spalled concrete at slab edges and undersides. If the balcony slabs and parking garage structures have not been regularly maintained, a comprehensive concrete restoration project may be needed for recertification.

In the Electrical Report, the Minimum Inspection

- Building Code occupancy classification
  - Building Code type of construction classification
  - Inspection firm, inspector, and licensed professional names
  - Inspection firm contact information
- The first page also requires the certifying engineer or architect to state whether or not repairs are required.

In the Structural Report, the Minimum Inspection Guidelines include the following sections:

- Masonry Walls
- Floor and Roof Systems

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Guidelines include the following sections:

- Electrical Service
- Meter and Electrical Rooms
- Switchboards/Meter/Motor Control Centers
- Grounding
- Conductors
- Auxiliary Gutters/Wireways/Busways
- Electrical Panels
- Disconnects
- Branch Circuits
- Conduit/Raceways
- Low Voltage Wiring Methods
- Building Illumination
- Fire Alarm System
- Smoke Detectors
- Generator
- Site Wiring
- Swimming Pool/Spa Wiring
- Wiring to Mechanical Equipment
- General Additional Comments

One difference between the two counties is that Miami-Dade requires that parking area lighting be brought into compliance with current code requirement, which can be very expensive. Common electrical problems are corroded equipment, improper labeling, missing covers, broken conduits, improper pool equipment bonding, inadequate work clearance around equipment, lack of local disconnects for roof fans and air handlers, and unsealed slab and wall penetrations.

If you receive the notification from the building department for the 40-Year Recertification, you are not alone. Considering the residential condominium construction boom in the 1970s, thousands of buildings will face recertification in the next

few years. If your building has been well maintained over the years, only minor repairs may be necessary. Performing a comprehensive concrete restoration project prior to the recertification can alleviate the pressure of completing a project within the 180-day limit after the report has been issued.

Like most of the situations we face in life, it is better to be proactive than to procrastinate.

For more information in Miami-Dade ([www.miamidade.gov/pa/property\\_recertification.asp](http://www.miamidade.gov/pa/property_recertification.asp)) and in Broward ([www.broward.org/codeappeals/pages/safetyinspectionprogram.aspx](http://www.broward.org/codeappeals/pages/safetyinspectionprogram.aspx)).

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