WINDOW CLEANING BAY AREA

WHITE PAPER

San Francisco Facade Inspection Ordinance For High-Rise Owners

San Francisco's facade program for high-rise owners: comprehensive and supplemental reports for 15+ story buildings, deadlines by tier, licensed inspector requirements and why cleaning is not an inspection.

Window Cleaning Bay Area · October 2026
windowcleaningbayarea.com · grayson@windowcleaningbayarea.com

Executive Summary

San Francisco's Building Facade Inspection and Maintenance Program covers every building five or more stories tall, and buildings 15 or more stories tall have extra requirements. Owners of high-rises need to track two report types and two sets of deadlines, the next of which falls on December 31, 2026 for the oldest buildings. This paper summarizes the program as published by the Department of Building Inspection (DBI).

Key Points

- **Who Is Covered:** Buildings 5 or more stories tall of Type I, II, III or IV construction. SF.gov, DBI Facade Program
- **Comprehensive Reports:** Required for all covered buildings, then every ten years. SF.gov, DBI Facade Program
- **15+ Stories:** Also need a supplemental facade inspection report. SF.gov, DBI Facade Program
- **Licensed Professional:** Inspections must be done by a California-licensed architect or engineer. SF.gov, DBI Facade Program
- **Cleaning Is Not Inspection:** Window cleaning does not satisfy the program; only a licensed professional's report does.

Ordinance Overview

Requirements are set out in San Francisco Existing Building Code Chapter 5F and Administrative Bulletin AB-110. Noncompliant conditions found in the report must be addressed. SF.gov, DBI Facade Program

15+ Story Requirements

A comprehensive report is "a general and detailed inspection of all building facades." A supplemental report, required for buildings 15 or more stories, "is a general inspection of all facades." SF.gov, DBI Facade Program Buildings built after 1997 submit a supplemental report every five years until their initial comprehensive report. After that they alternate every five years between supplemental and comprehensive reports. SF.gov, DBI Facade Program Historic resources must follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and use a professional with historic preservation expertise. SF.gov, DBI Facade Program

Report Deadlines

Tier	Built	Comprehensive Due	Supplemental Due
1	Before 1910	Dec 31, 2021	Dec 31, 2026
2	1910–1925	Dec 31, 2023	Dec 31, 2028
3	1926–1970	Dec 31, 2025	Dec 31, 2030
4	1971–1997	Dec 31, 2027	Dec 31, 2032
5	After 1997	Dec 31 Of 30th Year After CFC	April 30, 2024

Source: SF.gov DBI Facade Program page, retrieved October 2026. Check the page for current dates.

Access And Coordination

The licensed architect or engineer leads the inspection and writes the report. They must follow AB-110, whose Attachments C and D list report contents. SF.gov, DBI Facade Program Facade inspections on tall buildings often need rope or suspended access. Where WCBA coordinates that access, it is performed by a vetted partner crew, not WCBA crews. Scheduling cleaning before an inspection can make the glass and frames easier to see, but the cleaning crew does not inspect the facade or certify its condition.

Submitting

Reports can be emailed to dbi.facade@sfgov.org with "Facade Inspection Report" in the subject line, or delivered to the Permit Center, DBI Technical Services Division, 49 South Van Ness Avenue, 2nd floor. DBI Technical Services can be reached at (628) 652-3720. SF.gov, DBI Facade Program

Sources

- SF.gov, DBI Facade Inspection And Maintenance Program. https://www.sf.gov/reports--june-2024--dbi-facade-inspection-and-maintenance-program
- SF Existing Building Code Chapter 5F; DBI Administrative Bulletin AB-110 (cited by name).

This paper summarizes regulations and agency guidance for general information and is not legal advice. Requirements may change and vary by city; consult the current text, your local agency and qualified professionals.

About Window Cleaning Bay Area

Window Cleaning Bay Area provides commercial window cleaning, pressure washing and solar panel cleaning across the San Francisco Bay Area. Contact: grayson@windowcleaningbayarea.com