



Legislation Details (With Text)

File #:	Int 0176-2010	Version:	*	Name:	Creation of an Electrical Safety/Stray Voltage Task Force.
Type:	Introduction	Status:		Status:	Filed
		In control:		In control:	Committee on Transportation
On agenda:	4/14/2010				
Enactment date:		Enactment #:			
Title:	A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to the creation of an Electrical Safety/Stray Voltage Task Force.				
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Indexes:					
Attachments:					

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
4/14/2010	*	City Council	Introduced by Council	
4/14/2010	*	City Council	Referred to Comm by Council	
12/31/2013	*	City Council	Filed (End of Session)	

Int. No. 176

By Council Members Vallone, Fidler, James, Koppell, Rose, Williams and Halloran

A Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York, in relation to the creation of an Electrical Safety/Stray Voltage Task Force.

Be it enacted by the Council as follows:

Section 1. Declaration of legislative findings and intent. On January 16, 2004, New Yorkers became aware of the potentially deadly effects of stray voltage on sidewalks and streets when Jodie S. Lane was electrocuted and killed while walking her two dogs in Manhattan. Ms. Lane's death prompted an examination of the City's electrical-related infrastructure, which found hundreds of cases of dangerous stray voltage. This widespread, dangerous problem caused the Council to enact legislation designed to protect New Yorkers from stray voltage. The legislation required the New York City Department of Transportation and the local electric corporation, Consolidated Edison, to annually test for stray voltage and issue a report based upon their findings. The legislation also required the local electric corporation to make repairs within twenty-four hours of the

discovery of stray voltage.

Despite the passage of this legislation, stray voltage continues to be a problem on New York City sidewalks and streets. In February 2006, four people were shocked near the Port Authority bus terminal in Manhattan because of a frayed electric cable and a dog was electrocuted in Brooklyn. In the years between 2004 and 2009, 1014 people or pets have been shocked by stray voltage on the streets of New York City. On February 10, 2010 five people were shocked by stray voltage in Herald Square and one woman had to be hospitalized. The Council believes it is necessary to become more proactive in preventing stray voltage, rather than just testing and making repairs when stray voltage is found. The creation of an Electrical Safety/Stray Voltage Task Force to study the problem of stray voltage on New York City sidewalks and streets and make recommendations for preventing future stray voltage, educating the public about stray voltage and how to respond when stray voltage is detected, will help to prevent future injuries or death to pedestrians and their pets.

§2. Chapter 1 of title 19 of the administrative code of the city of New York is amended by adding a new section 19-154 to read as follows:

§19-154 Electrical safety/stray voltage task force. a. For the purposes of this section, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

1. “Local electric corporation” shall have the same meaning as in section 19-153 of this chapter.
2. “Local electric corporation employee organization” shall mean any organization or association of employees of the local electric corporation whose primary purpose is to provide representation concerning wages, benefits and working conditions.

3. “Stray voltage” shall have the same meaning as defined in section 19-153 of this chapter.

b. There is hereby established a task force to study electrical safety/stray voltage problems in New York city. This task force shall be comprised of eleven members, six of whom shall be appointed by the speaker of the council and five of whom shall be appointed by the mayor. The speaker shall designate one member as the chairperson. The task force must be comprised of at least one member from the department of

transportation, one member from the local electric corporation, one member from the local electric corporation employee organization representing the workers who maintain the electrical street infrastructure, one member representing environmental groups, one transportation planning expert, one animal rights advocate and five members representing civic groups, one from each borough. Each appointed task force member may be removed for cause by the appointing authority and any vacancy shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment was made. The task force shall be deemed established upon appointment of six of its members.

c. Members of the task force shall serve without compensation and shall meet when deemed necessary by the chairperson, but in no event shall the task force meet less than six times in a calendar year.

d. The task force shall examine electrical safety in the city of New York, with a focus on the problem of electrical-related infrastructure emitting stray voltage.

e. The task force shall issue a report to the speaker and the mayor within twelve months from its establishment. The report shall include recommendations on detecting and preventing electrical safety problems, with a focus on electrical-related infrastructure emitting stray voltage, and include recommendations on procedures and protocols to avoid future stray voltage, how to educate the public about electrical safety/stray voltage issues, protocols for responding to electrical safety problems and other recommendations to avoid and/or mitigate the effects of stray voltage. This report shall be posted on the city's website within seven days from its submission to the speaker and mayor. The task force shall cease operation one year after the submission of its report

§3. This local law shall take effect immediately after its enactment into law.

LS # 681
03/04/10-5:17pm
JW
Int237/2006