

TO: Fire Commissioner Lillian Bonsignore

CC: Chief Thomas Currao, Fire Prevention
Chief Kevin Woods, Fire Operations

FROM: Dr. William Acker, Executive Director, NY-BEST
Claudia Villar-Leeman, Sr. Director, Policy & Regulatory Affairs, NY-BEST

DATE: June 24, 2026

RE: **Streamlining FDNY Permitting for Energy Storage Systems**



Dear colleagues:

NY-BEST thanks the NYC Fire Department (FDNY) for your efforts to review and process permitting applications for energy storage systems (ESS) in New York City. FDNY has long been a national leader in developing safety standards for ESS, and your work to establish a rigorous local permitting framework has made New York City a model for other jurisdictions across the nation and globe. NY-BEST and its members are grateful for that commitment and take seriously the responsibility FDNY carries to protect New Yorkers.

Energy storage is critical to achieving energy affordability for New York City. New York City residents pay among the highest electricity rates in the nation. Battery energy storage systems deployed at scale can change that: by reducing peak demand and deferring costly grid upgrades, energy storage directly lowers electricity costs for ratepayers. Indeed, a typical 5 MW community-scale storage project participating in the Statewide Solar For All (SSFA) program generates around \$75,000 in annual payments to low-income households.¹ These projects also support good-paying union jobs and cleaner air in the communities that need it most. NYSERDA modeling shows the need for at least 2,000 MW of energy storage in New York City by 2030;² there are currently about 90 MW of projects deployed,³ with ~995 MW more in the development pipeline.⁴ State incentive programs totaling nearly \$2 billion are now active to accelerate

¹ This calculation assumes that the project generates revenue through the Demand Reduction Value portion of the Value of Distributed Energy Resources (VDER) value stack. The actual bill credits generated via the SSFA program in a given year will vary depending on the New York Independent System Operator (NYISO) capacity market values that year.

² Case 18-E-0130. New York State Department of Public Service and the New York Energy Research and Development Authority, *New York's 6 GW Energy Storage Roadmap: Policy Options for Continued Growth in Energy Storage*, filed March 15, 2024, "Figure 22. Storage Build by Location," p. 74.

³ Con Edison Company of New York, Inc., Standardized Interconnection Requirements (SIR), Completed Projects, May 2026, available [here](#).

⁴ This reflects projects in late-stage development in New York City, having paid 100% of utility interconnection costs and contracted with NYSERDA for retail storage incentives. Based on data from New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) Retail Incentive Dashboard. Accessed [here](#), June 2026. This includes 165 MW awarded but not yet complete in NYC Blocks 1-5 under the 3 GW Roadmap, and 830 MW awarded but not yet complete in NYC Blocks 6-9 under the 6 GW Roadmap. This was calculated assuming an average system duration of 3.925 hours.

deployment, and federal Investment Tax Credits provide additional economic support for these projects. As a result, the volume of projects seeking permits is growing rapidly.

We are concerned about the long FDNY permitting timelines for ESS and are eager to collaborate to improve the process. FDNY permitting for energy storage systems currently averages over eight months, and in some cases over a year, from first submission to approval. At that pace, many projects in the current pipeline will not be built in time to capture federal incentives (which expire in 2032 and carry requirements that tighten each year), costing the city hundreds of millions of dollars in foregone investment, ratepayer savings, and union labor. We appreciate that each ESS installation is subject to a thorough technical and plan review that involves multiple units within the Bureau of Fire Prevention as well as the HazMat Operations Unit. However, we believe additional FDNY staff support, combined with targeted procedural and accountability improvements, can serve to shorten permitting timelines without lowering standards of safety.

Overview of Recommendations:

I. Staffing

- A. Increase Tech Management staff and compensation.
- B. Consider creating an FDNY Energy Modernization Unit and/or Energy Ombudsperson.
- C. Harness additional funding.

II. Streamlining

- A. Issue exhaustive upfront checklists and ensure all deficiencies are included in the first LOD.
- B. Ensure review of LOD resubmissions are prioritized over new applications.
- C. Incorporate automatic meetings to discuss deficiencies.
- D. Improve coordination between FDNY units and with OTCR, including by addressing circular requirements.
- E. Ensure policy and procedural changes are codified and communicated in advance.

III. Accountability

- A. Establish public reporting on permitting timelines.
- B. Establish mandatory review timelines.

Detailed Recommendations:

I. Staffing

A. Increase Tech Management staff and compensation.

The volume of ESS permit applications has grown rapidly, but the Tech Management team remains small relative to this workload. Current first review times for ESS permits and Fire Protection permits are generally 9 weeks at minimum, and often 12-16 weeks– significantly longer than review times for ESS permits at the Department of Buildings. NY-BEST urges FDNY to increase the number of staff dedicated to ESS permit review and to ensure compensation is competitive enough to attract and retain qualified reviewers. Institutional knowledge of this technically complex and fast-evolving technology is difficult to rebuild once lost. We are happy to advocate to the NYC Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in support of an FDNY New Needs Request.

B. Consider creating an FDNY Energy Modernization Unit and/or Energy Ombudsperson.

NY-BEST recommends that FDNY explore the creation of a dedicated Energy Modernization Team, and/or an Energy Ombudsperson, that could help reduce silos between FDNY units. As ESS permitting involves multiple review units, including Technical Management, Fire Alarm, Fire Protection, and HazMat Operations, applicants frequently encounter inconsistent guidance and communication gaps between teams. A centralized team, whose staff reports both to their home unit and to the head of the Energy Modernization Unit, could help enable deeper staff specialization in ESS permitting, ensure consistency in deficiency determinations, improve coordination across units, and provide a single point of contact for applicants navigating the permitting process.

C. Harness additional funding.

NY-BEST recognizes that staffing increases require dedicated funding and we are committed to helping identify resources. One potential avenue is to increase ESS permitting application fees, which are currently much lower than the staff cost of reviewing the applications; most clean energy companies would be happy to support significantly increased fees if it resulted in improved permitting review turnaround times. Another potential avenue is to pursue co-funding from the State, particularly NYSERDA, which has a direct interest in accelerating ESS deployment in New York City. NY-BEST is prepared to advocate with NYSERDA and other City and State partners in support of this effort.

II. Streamlining

A. Issue exhaustive upfront checklists and ensure all deficiencies are included in the first Letter of Deficiency (LOD).

NY-BEST recommends that FDNY develop and publish a comprehensive checklist for

ESS permit applications, modeled on (and coordinated with) the thorough checklist already used by the Office of Technical Certification and Research (OTCR). While FDNY's existing [ESS Equipment Approval and Installation Guide](#) outlines the documents required for submission, it does not provide the level of specificity needed to guide applicants on what conditions or design choices will trigger a Letter of Deficiency (LOD). A complete upfront checklist that all FDNY reviewers adhere to would allow applicants to submit stronger initial applications, reduce unnecessary review cycles, and give both applicants and reviewers a clear and shared roadmap. NY-BEST further urges FDNY to ensure that all deficiencies are identified in the first LOD, so that applicants are not surprised by new objections in subsequent rounds, which is currently a common occurrence. New issues raised in later rounds effectively reset the clock on an application, triggering a new 11 to 16 week review cycle even for minor corrections, dramatically slowing the process.

- B. Ensure review of LOD resubmissions are prioritized over new applications.
NY-BEST recommends that FDNY prioritize resubmissions in response to LODs over new applications. Currently, when an applicant responds to an LOD, that resubmission is placed at the back of the queue behind new filings, triggering a full 11 to 16 week review cycle even when the correction is minor. When an applicant has already invested months in the review process and responds promptly to a deficiency, it is counterproductive to treat that resubmission as a new application. A targeted, expedited review of LOD responses would significantly reduce total project timelines and help shrink the queue, without adding burden to FDNY's overall workload.
- C. Incorporate automatic meetings to discuss deficiencies.
NY-BEST recommends that FDNY establish a standardized mechanism for applicants to schedule a meeting with reviewers to discuss LODs before resubmitting, to help resolve any misunderstandings. Currently, applicants are often unsure of how to discuss deficiencies directly with FDNY staff, which leads to guesswork in responses and unnecessary additional rounds of review. A brief optional meeting scheduled automatically at the LOD stage could resolve ambiguities quickly and significantly reduce the total number of review cycles. Notably, OTCR does host a kickoff call to introduce the projects at the beginning of the application process; FDNY should conduct a similar meeting, or consider coordinating with OTCR to be included in the same kickoff meeting.
- D. Improve coordination between FDNY units and with OTCR, including by addressing circular requirements.
NY-BEST recommends that FDNY improve internal coordination between the Tech Management, Fire Alarm, Fire Protection, and HazMat Operations units, as well as with OTCR. Applicants currently experience significant delays waiting for one unit to act after another has completed its review, and inconsistent requirements between

units creates confusion. Additionally, applicants are currently required to resubmit documentation in the TM-1 application that was already provided and reviewed as part of the TM-2 process, suggesting an opportunity to improve information sharing between FDNY reviewers and reduce redundant submissions. Clearer handoff protocols and regular cross-team communication on pending ESS applications would help reduce these gaps.

Further, several procedural requirements currently create circular dependencies that delay permitting. Two examples include:

- FDNY requires zoning-related paperwork from the DOB as a prerequisite for safety reviews, but DOB in turn requires FDNY approval as its own prerequisite. This creates a circular reference that stalls both processes.
- The Fire Alarm unit typically will not issue final approval until both ESS and Fire Protection permits have cleared, adding a full additional review cycle at the end of the process. Even with no LODs, this sequential structure often results in more than a 20-week wait for final approval from the Fire Alarm unit.

NY-BEST urges FDNY to eliminate these dependencies and allow review tracks to proceed in parallel, or else create clearer sequencing between the units and departments.

- E. Ensure policy and procedural changes are codified and communicated in advance. NY-BEST recommends that FDNY utilize its existing bulletin and rule-making processes to communicate policy and procedural changes before they take effect, with a clear effective date, and without applying new requirements to projects already mid-review. At times, new requirements have been introduced through Letters of Deficiency without advance notice or a corresponding update to published guidance, creating confusion and adding significant time to the review process. For example, the requirement that site-specific Hazard Mitigation Analysis reports be prepared by a third-party engineer emerged through LODs in late 2024 with no prior notice, as did the requirement for site-specific commissioning and decommissioning plans. In both cases, requirements that applicants had no way to anticipate caused delays and complications that could have been avoided had the requirements been published in advance.

III. Accountability

- A. Establish public reporting on permitting timelines.

NY-BEST recommends that FDNY report publicly on ESS permitting timelines as part of the Mayor's Management Report. The NYC Department of Buildings already publishes permitting performance indicators, including first review and start-to-finish turnaround times. FDNY does not currently report equivalent metrics for ESS permitting, making it difficult for applicants to plan project timelines and for

City leadership to assess whether resources are adequate. NY-BEST recommends that FDNY report, at minimum, average first review times and average start-to-finish approval times for ESS, Fire Alarm, and Fire Protection permits, consistent with the model DOB uses. In addition, NY-BEST encourages FDNY to create a public open data database to track project application status and permitting timelines, similar to the DOB permitting data already available to the public.

B. Establish mandatory review timelines.

NY-BEST recommends that FDNY establish mandatory turnaround times for ESS permit reviews. We recognize that total project timelines are often affected by factors outside FDNY's control, including the time applicants need to respond to LODs, complete additional testing, or obtain approvals from other departments. Mandatory timelines should therefore apply only to the time the application is actively under FDNY review. A clear, enforceable standard for FDNY's own turnaround time would give applicants predictability, incentivize timely review, and provide a measurable benchmark against which performance can be assessed.

NY-BEST thanks FDNY for its continued commitment to energy storage safety and looks forward to working collaboratively to develop solutions that strengthen the permitting process, support New York City's energy affordability goals, and deliver real benefits to New Yorkers. We welcome the opportunity to discuss these recommendations at your convenience.

Sincerely,



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