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OPINION**EDITORIAL**

A rising NYC must not neglect safety

Lately, it seems there's construction everywhere. City developers received a stunning 52,618 residential permits for apartments and homes from July 2014 through June 2015 — a 156 percent increase from the year before, according to the New York Building Congress.

That boom generates economic activity and new opportunities — but it shouldn't bring fear of injury or death.

In April, construction worker Carlos Moncayo was killed when a 13-foot unfortified trench collapsed. Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus Vance Jr. charged the involved companies, foreman and site superintendent with negligent homicide, manslaughter and reckless endangerment. They pleaded not guilty.

Those significant charges should serve as a warning regarding the dangerous side of NYC's building boom: Follow the law. Listen to warnings. Be careful and safe.

Vance said inspectors told general contractor Harco Construction and excavator Sky Materials Corp. of concerns in February. The day of the collapse, they issued more warnings. Moncayo, who spoke Spanish, was told in English. A last-minute warning in Spanish came too late.

Construction-related deaths in NYC are on the rise. Last year, there were 12 such deaths. There have been 10 this year, as of last week. Incidents, from flying scaffolding to crane collapses, have injured city residents, too. In May, 10 people were hurt when a crane's rigging strap snapped and a heating and cooling unit crashed onto Madison Avenue. There are reports of developers who receive violations at some sites but still build elsewhere.

Officials are taking notice. The city set up a Department of Buildings hotline to report problems. Vance and the city Department of Investigation, which worked on the Harco case, are spearheading a construction fraud task force, too.

Beyond the need for citywide enforcement, the real responsibility lies with those at the heart of the boom: construction firms and supervisors. They must be more vigilant and better trained. They should fortify scaffolding, cranes, trenches and more. They should care about workers and residents who travel under and near their projects.

Moncayo's death illustrates a simple lesson: safety first.