

City installs lightning rods on beach buildings

BY LISA L. COLANGELO

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Lifeguards said they were worried about potential lightning strikes during storms. (GEOFFREY CROFT/NYC PARK ADVOCATES)

Terrified lifeguards and parks workers demanded the city install lightning rods on the new modular bathrooms and lifeguard shacks along city beaches, the Daily News has learned.

A contractor has raced to install roughly 15 lightning rods on each of the 33 modular buildings in Coney Island and Rockaway, to protect them from potential bolt strikes.

“We definitely were anxious,” said one Rockaway lifeguard, who asked not to be named. “Whenever there is a lightning storm, (these structures are) where we have to go.”

Parks Department officials said the rods are being installed out of “an abundance of caution.”

“The new modular buildings are not at a high risk for lightning strike, based on their relatively low elevation, construction, and geographic location,” the agency said in a statement. “Lightning rods are also not required by any NYC building code.” The agency said installation of the rods did not delay opening any of the buildings.

“Anytime you have a building near the water, you should consider lightning protection,” said Robert Cooper, owner of Associated Lightning Rod Company, which handled the work on the city-owned buildings.



Contractors were busily installing lightning rods on modular lifeguard shacks and public restrooms at city beaches in recent weeks. (GEOFFREY CROFT/NYC PARK ADVOCATES)

Cooper pointed out that the lightning rods could not have been installed in advance, since the wiring can only be put in place after the buildings are rooted into the ground.

“No Parks (Dept.) worker was going to set foot into these buildings unless these rods were put in and neither should the public,” said Geoffrey Croft of NYC Park Advocates, who has fielded numerous gripes from lifeguards.

Croft said the buildings have also had problems with leaks and lack of air conditioning.

The city purchased the modular structures to replace lifeguard and bathroom facilities destroyed and damaged by Superstorm Sandy.

Some local residents have complained about their appearance and height, while others have lauded the futuristic design.

lcolangelo@nydailynews.com

