

Ceiling Collapse Accident Evidence Checklist

866 Atty Law
New York City Personal Injury
Lawyers
(866) 288-9529

Collect these 8 categories of evidence within 48 hours of a ceiling collapse to protect your premises liability claim in New York.

■ **IMPORTANT: NYC Housing Authority cases require a Notice of Claim filed within 90 days. All other premises liability claims have a 3-year statute of limitations in New York.**

1 Photographs and Video of the Collapse Site

■ Photograph the collapsed ceiling area immediately

Capture the debris field, exposed structural elements, the area above the collapse, and full-room context shots. Use both flash and natural light.

✓ *Take a minimum of 20 photographs from multiple angles before any cleanup begins.*

■ Document all visible water staining, mold, and prior damage

Photograph brown water stains, visible mold growth, sagging areas, cracks, and any ceiling sections that show pre-existing deterioration.

✓ *Pre-existing damage photos prove the landlord had constructive notice of the dangerous condition.*

■ Record video walkthrough of the entire space

A continuous video walkthrough captures context that still photos miss — include narration describing the date, time, and conditions observed.

✓ *Upload immediately to cloud storage to prevent loss if your phone is damaged or seized.*

2 Written Repair Requests to Landlord or Property Manager

■ Preserve all text messages to landlord or super

Screenshot every text message thread that references ceiling damage, water leaks, stains, or repair requests. Save with timestamps visible.

✓ *Prior written repair requests are the single most powerful evidence of landlord negligence.*

■ Collect all emails sent to landlord or management company

Export full email threads as PDF files. Include delivery receipts and any auto-replies confirming receipt of your repair requests.

■ Locate certified mail records for any written notices

Retrieve USPS tracking confirmation and delivery receipts for any written letters sent to the landlord requesting repairs.

3 Building Violation and Inspection Records

■ Request NYC HPD violation search via FOIL

Submit a Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) request to the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development for all violations on record at the property address.

✓ *HPD violation records show the landlord was previously cited for the same conditions that caused your collapse.*

■ Obtain NYC DOB building inspection records

Request Department of Buildings inspection history, stop-work orders, and permits for the property. Available at nyc.gov/buildings.

■ Search 311 complaint history for the address

NYC 311 records document prior tenant complaints about leaks, structural issues, and ceiling damage at the same property. Request these records through FOIL.

4 Medical Records and Treatment Documentation

■ Seek emergency medical treatment immediately

Go to the emergency room even without visible injuries. Traumatic brain injuries, spinal cord damage, and internal injuries may not produce immediate symptoms.

✓ *Gaps in medical treatment give defense attorneys grounds to argue injuries are unrelated to the collapse.*

■ Request copies of all diagnostic imaging

Obtain copies of X-rays, CT scans, MRI reports, and EMG studies documenting your injuries. These establish the direct physical link between the collapse and your condition.

■ Document all follow-up appointments and therapy sessions

Keep a running log of every medical appointment, physical therapy session, neurologist visit, and orthopedic consultation with dates and provider names.

■ Save every medical bill, prescription receipt, and EOB

Explanation of Benefits (EOB) statements from your insurer, out-of-pocket receipts, and itemized medical bills establish the economic damages in your claim.

5 Witness Statements

■ Collect names and contact information of all witnesses

Obtain full legal names, phone numbers, and email addresses from neighbors, coworkers, family members, or bystanders who witnessed the collapse or its aftermath.

✓ *Collect witness information within 24 hours — memories fade and witnesses become unavailable quickly.*

■ Request written accounts from neighbors aware of prior conditions

Neighbors who previously observed ceiling damage, water leaks, or reported similar issues provide corroborating evidence of the landlord's constructive notice.

6 Physical Debris Samples

■ Retain samples of collapsed ceiling material

Place debris samples — including drywall fragments, plaster pieces, water-damaged insulation, and ceiling tiles — in sealed plastic bags labeled with the date and location collected.

✓ *Physical samples allow structural engineers to identify defective materials and construction code violations.*

■ Preserve any fallen fixtures, pipes, or hardware

Retain light fixtures, pipe sections, mounting hardware, and any structural components that fell with the ceiling. Do not discard any material before your attorney reviews it.

7 Property Maintenance and Inspection Records

■ **Request maintenance logs from landlord or building manager**

Building maintenance logs document inspection dates, repair work ordered, contractors used, and work completion status — revealing whether known defects were left unrepaired.

■ **Obtain lease agreement and building inspection disclosures**

Your lease may contain clauses relevant to the landlord's maintenance obligations. Prior inspection disclosures may show the landlord was aware of structural deficiencies.

8 Official Incident Reports

■ **File a formal incident report with the property owner**

Submit a written incident report to the landlord or property manager immediately. Request written confirmation of receipt and preserve any response received.

✓ *Document the exact date and time you filed the report and the name of the person who received it.*

■ **Request FDNY or police report if emergency services responded**

If the FDNY, paramedics, or police responded to the scene, request official copies of their incident reports. These create an independent contemporaneous record of the collapse.

■ **File Notice of Claim within 90 days for NYCHA properties**

Cases against the New York City Housing Authority, NYC Department of Education, or any municipal entity require a Notice of Claim filed within 90 days of the accident. Missing this deadline permanently bars your claim.

✓ *Call 866 Atty Law immediately at (866) 288-9529 if your collapse occurred in a city-owned building.*

Daily Injury & Symptom Log — Fill In After the Accident

Date of accident: _____

Location of accident: _____

Injuries noticed immediately: _____

Injuries noticed within 24–48 hours: _____

Activities now unable to perform: _____

Work days missed: _____

Medical providers seen: _____

Pain level today (1–10): _____

Free Case Evaluation — No Fees Unless We Win

866 Atty Law represents ceiling collapse victims across all 5 NYC boroughs. Multi-million dollar verdicts secured for premises liability clients.

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