

Interdepartmental report on inspections and follow-up actions on mini-storage facilities

The Government conducted an interdepartmental briefing today (December 29) at which representatives from the Fire Services Department (FSD), the Buildings Department (BD), the Lands Department (LandsD) and the Labour Department (LD) reported the latest situation of the departments' inspections and follow-up work on mini-storage facilities.

The FSD, the BD, LandsD and the LD have conducted a territory-wide inspection of mini-storage facilities since June 28 this year. The aim of the operation is to improve the safety level of the mini-storage premises, so as to comply with the current legislation.

Eight hundred and eighty-five mini-storage facilities have been identified by the departments concerned through various means, including online search, field inspections, information provided by other parties and a scouting exercise of all industrial buildings in Hong Kong completed by the FSD by the end of November. The FSD has completed the inspection work of 756 mini-storage premises found in 288 buildings.

The Acting Assistant Director (Fire Safety) of the FSD, Mr Terrance Tsang, said, "As at December 23, the FSD has issued 1 267 Fire Hazard Abatement Notices (FHANs) to 257 persons in charge of the relevant mini-storage facilities. Fifty FHANs had been complied with."

The Chief Building Surveyor (Fire Safety) of the BD, Mr Michael Pang, said that the BD joined the FSD to take enforcement action. Upon consolidating the information obtained from the inspections, the BD issued statutory orders under the Buildings Ordinance to owners of mini-storage premises with irregularities, requiring them to carry out rectification works within a specified period. As at December 23, the BD had issued 571 orders in respect of 259 mini-storage premises.

The Principal Land Executive (Land Control and Lease Enforcement) of LandsD, Mr Patrick Leung, said, "As at December 23, the land leases of the lots where a total of 871 mini-storage premises are situated have been checked. The leases of most of these mini-storage premises permit godown use, while 213 premises were suspected to have breached the uses specified in the lease. Regarding these cases of suspected breach of land lease, LandsD has conducted site inspection and confirmed that 193 mini-storage premises have breached the uses specified in the lease." As for the remaining cases of suspected breach of land lease, LandsD is seeking legal advice on some of the cases. For some other cases where staff of the District Lands Offices (DLOs) concerned could not gain immediate entry to the premises for site inspection, respective DLOs have written to the owners to make an appointment for or confirm the time and date of the next inspection.

The Chief Occupational Safety Officer (Operations) of the LD, Mr Thomas Chan, said that, as at December 23, the LD had inspected 813 mini-storage facilities, issued 13 improvement notices and 221 written warnings and initiated 13 prosecutions in respect of matters related to the occupational safety of employees.

Various irregularities in contravention of the Fire Services Ordinance were found in the above mini-storage facilities. The irregularities identified included:

- i. undesirable types of locking devices for escape doors;
- ii. insufficient coverage of the hose reel system;
- iii. insufficient exit signs and directional signs;
- iv. obstruction to/insufficient number of windows; and
- v. undesirable arrangement of storage cubicles.

Irregularities in contravention of the Buildings Ordinance were generally found in the mini-storage premises, and these mainly included:

- i. inadequate width of the means of escape along the aisles between the storage cubicles; and

ii. the layout of the storage cubicles causing excessive travel distance in the escape route.

The non-compliance with the occupational safety legislation observed by the LD mainly concerned:

- (i) exit obstruction;
- (ii) locked exits; and
- (iii) contravention of the requirements of improvement notices.

The departments concerned will continue to follow up on the cases in accordance with relevant ordinances and will request the building owners and persons in charge of the relevant mini-storage facilities to abate these safety hazards as soon as possible.

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