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17 June 2014

To: Authorized Persons

Dear Sirs / Madams,

CIRCULAR NOTICE:
Improvement Measures for Processing of
General Building Plans by the Fire Services Department

Sharing that construction schedule is always tight and early approval for commencement of building works from the Buildings Department (BD) is crucial to the timely completion of building projects, the Fire Services Department (FSD) reviews the related procedures from time to time with a view to exploring measures to streamline processing mechanism for general building plans (GBP) to address the pressing need of the building industry as a whole.

In our recent review, we identified two main objectives, i.e. expediting processing time and increasing approval rate. Dovetailing the review, a series of focus group meetings and workshops were held with authorized persons (APs), developers and other building professionals for exchanging views and collecting feedback. Documented below are the improvement measures that we have launched recently for your attention:

● **Re-structuring of the New Projects Division**

We set up a three-tier vetting system to enhance quality assurance and consistency in processing GBP. On the other hand, additional Processing Officers have been redeployed through resource optimization to expedite processing time for those GBP conforming to code-compliant requirements.

● **Prioritization of GBP Submissions**

- New Submission Plans and Resubmitted Plans are processed with top priority to facilitate BD's early approval and consent to commencement of building works.
- For Amended Plans, priority is given to those submissions for FSI

Acceptance Inspection to facilitate early application for Occupation Permit. To identify such submissions, APs are required to conspicuously indicate on the covering letter to the BD that the relevant submissions are for "FSI Acceptance Inspection". Upon completing processing and if the submissions are endorsed, our Processing Officers will inform the APs by telephone so that FSI/501 can be submitted immediately for arranging inspection. To prevent abuse of this measure, we will review its effectiveness in six-month interval.

- **Case Officer System**

We adopt a Case Officer System for New Submission Plans and Resubmitted Plans featuring that the same Processing Officer will be assigned to process GBP of a building project until first approval is given by the BD.

- **Concurrent In-house Processing**

For GBP involving a number of registered or licensed premises, our Processing Officers will request the APs to provide extra copies of GBP for seeking comments on siting and additional fire safety requirements from various licensing offices of the FSD concurrently in order to expedite processing time. We appreciate the assistance from APs in this regard and look forward to their continuous support.

- **Enhanced Openness for Plan Amendment**

We adopt a more open policy for plan amendment aiming at reducing abortive work and repeated submissions. Other than discrepancies involving structural aspects or major fire service installations, APs will be accepted to effect plan amendment to submitted GBP in accordance with the provision stipulated in PNAP ADM-2. We note that the cases of unendorsed GBP was cut down from 6.1% in 2012 to 3.7% in 2013. Notwithstanding the pros, this measure inevitably requires a longer processing time and APs should take into account of this factor. To ensure timely processing, plan amendments that cannot be completed in a calendar month from our Processing Officer's first call to the APs will not be accepted.

- **Notification Arrangement with the BD**

To tighten communication, a notification mechanism with the BD is being set up. Upon receiving GBP referral from the BD, FSD's Processing Officers will acknowledge the submissions by sending emails to BD's Case Officers. APs will be benefited from acquiring directly from BD's Case Officers the identities and contacts of FSD's Processing Officers responsible for their submissions. The notification

arrangement also furnishes an express channel for the FSD to provide comments and related advice to the BD concerning the GBP submissions and in turn expedite BD's processing action.

- **Deferred Submission of Fire Safety Management Plans (FSMP) for Open Kitchens in Residential Premises**

As details of FSMP may only be framed and finalized in a later stage of the building projects, submission of FSMP to the FSD can therefore be deferred. APs are responsible for ensuring that finalized FSMP for open kitchens are endorsed by the FSD before submitting FSI/501 for arranging FSI Acceptance Inspection. In this connection, APs are required to undertake accordingly in the FS Notes of the GBP.

- **Comment on Fuel Tank Rooms for Emergency Generators**


Should the MoE and FRC requirements for the location of fuel tanks rooms for emergency generators do not meet FSD's acceptance criteria, officers of our Dangerous Goods Division will directly elaborate FSD's comments to the APs.

Albeit short introduction of the improvement measures, we are glad to observe notable improvement and the encouraging results are well received by building professionals. We fully recognized that the improvement can hardly be materialized without the participation of APs and other building professionals particularly members of the FSD/AP Liaison Group. Our vision is that further improvement can be accomplished if cooperation with building professionals can be enhanced. In this connection, our observations and suggestions are furnished below for your attention:

- Amended Plans are on the rising trend. Admittedly, many amendments only involved minor layout changes. The number of Amended Plans could be reduced if piecemeal alterations could be bundled.
- Previous amendments in the FS Notes omitted in subsequent submissions were always noted.
- On some occasions, the GBP submissions were enquiry-basis and the fire safety provisions were not strictly in accordance with the Code of Practice for Minimum Fire Service Installations and Equipment.
- Withdrawal letters submitted to the BD should be copied to the FSD to avoid our abortive work. By the same token, submissions that no longer require FSD's processing should be withdrawn.

If you need clarification or further information, please contact Senior Divisional Officer Mr CHAN Kam-fai of our New Projects Division at tel. no. 2733 7666.

Yours faithfully,



(LO Siu-hang)
for Director of Fire Services

c.c. Hong Kong Institute of Architects
Hong Kong Institution of Engineers
Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors
The Association of Architectural Practices
The Real Estate Developers Association of Hong Kong
Director of the Architectural Services
Director of Housing
Director of Buildings