

Brief Notes of Liaison Meeting between FSD and Authorized Persons

Date : 9 October 2012 (Tuesday)
Time : 1530 hours
Venue : Conference Room, Fire Safety Command, FSD

Matters Discussed in the Meeting :

1. Registered Fire Engineer (RFE) Scheme

The contract for Consultancy Study on the Business Impact Assessment (BIA) had been awarded to a consultancy firm and the study had commenced on 11.6.2012.

The 1st Project Steering Committee (PSC) meeting chaired by Assistant Director (Fire Safety) comprising members from SB, FSD, EABFU and representatives from the consultant was held on 3.7.2012. During the meeting, the consultant had presented an inception report stating the approach, preliminary observations and workflow of the study.

The consultant had conducted interviews to potential service providers in August and September in order to collect their views on the revised RFE Scheme as well as to assess the level of charge of RFE. The findings would be presented in the 2nd PSC meeting scheduled to be held on 11.10.2012. In general, potential services providers were in support of the implementation of the RFE Scheme and willing to provide the RFE services as an additional revenue stream. Up to the present moment, the BIA study went smoothly and would be completed in January 2013.

2. Review of Codes of Practice for Minimum Fire Service Installations and Equipment and Inspection, Testing and Maintenance of Installations and Equipment (CoP)

Various licensing premises, by nature of their normal operation, might constitute relatively higher level of fire and life risk. In this regard, licensing premises might be subject to separate sets of fire services requirements in addition to the fire services requirements imposed on the

building in accordance with Section 16(1)(b) of the Building Ordinance, Cap 123. For example, karaoke establishment situated in a shopping arcade was subject to fire services requirements for licensing application in addition to the fire services requirements already provided in the premises as part of the building FSI. Such additional fire services requirements might include enhanced provision of manual fire alarm system, sprinkler system (with fast-response-type sprinkler heads), smoke extraction system, etc. For avoidance of doubt, paragraph 4 of the FSD Circular Letter No. 4/2012 clarified that the additional fire services requirements dedicated to those licensing premises prevailing at the time of approval were still applicable.

3. Submission of Fire Engineering Reports and Enquiries

In general, the requirement of installing smoke detector in 'living room with open kitchen' did not include bedroom, toilet and balcony.

4. Natural Venting of Staircases

An open staircase was a staircase open on three sides for a height of not less than 900mm between the top of the balustrade or parapet and the underside of the flight of stair immediately above, and which was open to a void having an area of not less than 10m² and a minimum dimension of 1m and being unobstructed above to provide adequate ventilation according to the requirements of the Buildings Department. In a fire incident, smoke would be ventilated into the outside air and was not likely to affect, by natural convection, any exit route or fire service access point. Openable windows installed inside staircase were required by BS 5588 Part 5: 1991 relating to natural venting of staircase. Fixed opening such as louvre opening was considered not satisfying the requirements of the Section 8.4 of this standard as smoke outside the building might migrate into the staircase through the fixed opening due to wind and this might cause an undesirable environment for evacuation. In case of openable windows, evacuees might close the windows to prevent the smoke ingress or open them for venting the staircase depending on the prevailing situation.

5. Proposed Amendment to the Certificate of Compliance C (Fire Safety Requirements) (Form C)

The Cornwall Court fire in 2008 had aroused public concern over fire safety in buildings. The Ombudsman had then initiated a direct investigation in June 2009 and made in its investigation report a number of recommendations on fire safety regulatory measures for FSD and FEHD, including imposing conditions on food business licences for compliance with fire safety requirements; and working out arrangements to ensure compliance with fire safety requirements by food premises before renewing their food licences. In addition, the Efficiency Unit (EU) had completed a Management Study on Fire Safety Control and Related Management Issues and recommended, among others, that the FSD and other relevant departments should consider reviewing the documents required for submission in support of an application for a provisional licence (P-licence). In response to the recommendations made by the Ombudsman and EU, the FEHD and FSD intended to implement a series of measures to ensure compliance with fire safety requirements at all times by food premises as follows:

- (i) For General Restaurants (GRs) / Light Refreshment Restaurants (LRRs) / Factory Canteens (FCs), licensees were required at all times to comply with the fire safety requirements issued by the Director of Fire Services. Breaches of the requirements were classified into serious and minor ones, and failure to rectify the irregularities might ultimately lead to suspension or cancellation of licence by the FEHD;
- (ii) Food business licences of GRs / LRRs / FCs would only be renewed upon FSD's confirmation of the food premises holding valid Certificate(s) of Fire Service Installations and Equipment (FS251) and Annual Inspection Certificate of Ventilating System (AIC); and
- (iii) The Certificate of Compliance C (Fire Safety Requirements) (Form C) would be revised to require applicants to declare whether Polyurethane (PU) foam filled mattresses and upholstered furniture were in use in the subject premises, and if so to submit invoice(s) and test certificate(s). If they failed to do so, P-licences would not be granted.

Before implementing the proposed measures, FEHD and FSD had appointed a consultancy firm to conduct a Business Impact Assessment (BIA) to assess the business environment, the impact of the proposed measures on the food business and conduct consultation to relevant stakeholders including AP who would certify compliance of fire safety requirements in the Form C document for the licence application. The consultancy firm would soon conduct interview, survey and focus group study to analyse views and issues identified from stakeholder groups that the Government should take into account when developing the proposed measures. Invitation letters (with FEHD letterhead) would be sent out to various target groups in order to notify them that they were being identified as one of the relevant stakeholders for interviews.

6. Guidelines on Formulation of Fire Safety Requirements for New Railway Infrastructures

A presentation on the newly produced guidelines on formulation of fire safety requirements for new railway infrastructures was given to AP representatives.

7. Measurement of Means of Access

Under the Buildings Department's Code of Practice for Fire Safety in Buildings 2011 (Clause D8.4, Section 4 – Fireman's Lift, Part D – Means of Access), no part of the floor served by a fireman's lift should be more than 60m from the door of the lift lobby measured along actual passages. If the internal layout was not known at the design stage or was not shown on plan, a direct line measurement of 45m might be used for design purposes, provided that the layout of the floor when occupied satisfied the 60m requirement.

8. Design and Construction Requirements of Emergency Vehicular Access (EVA)

An EVA should be designed and constructed in accordance with the requirements under the Building (Planning) Regulation 41D Emergency Vehicular Access and Section 6 – Provision of Emergency

Vehicular Access, Part D – Means of Access, Code of Practice for Fire Safety in Buildings 2011.

9. Reduced Capacity of Water Tank for Sprinkler System

Reduction of the capacity of a water tank for sprinkler system, with both end supplies and dependent on inflow rate, would be considered in accordance with List-Item 2.10, List Two, Annex to FSD Circular Letter No. 3/2006. In view of reliability, water supplies were required to be directly fed from the town water main to the water tank without passing through any transfer pump or any other mechanical parts. In this connection, the water tank was subject to be positioned at low level allowing the town water main to feed the tank with its own inflow pressure.

10. Exemption of Requirements of Drencher System on Refuge Floors

A refuge floor provided a safe and comfortable place for occupants to take short rest and wait for rescue, if required, in case of fire. The provision of refuge floor should comply with the requirements as specified in Part B – Means of Escape, Code of Practice for Fire Safety in Buildings 2011. If an exemption was applied for the provision of a drencher system protecting the external wall openings of a refuge floor, AP should submit a fire engineering assessment to FSD for consideration. FSD was now reviewing the circumstances which justified waiving such requirement based on performance-based approach on merit of individual case.

11. Openable Windows Installed at Loading / Unloading Area

It was stipulated in Clause 5.4.2, Part I, FSD Circulation Letter No. 4/96 that for three or more basement levels and industrial basements, dynamic smoke extraction was required for each basement level except area solely for carparking purpose. In this regard, loading / unloading area was not classified as carparking area. The requirement had been specified in Clause 1.2 and 4.4 of the Code of Practice for Minimum Fire Service Installations and Equipment, April 2012 Version.

END

