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8 August 2007

To: Recipients of FSD Circular Letter

Dear Sir/Madam,

FSD Circular Letter No. 3/2007
Fire Service Installations and Equipment
required under the
Fire Safety (Buildings) Ordinance

The Fire Safety (Buildings) Ordinance (hereinafter referred to as the Ordinance) has come into operation on 1.7.2007. The purpose of the Ordinance is to provide better protection from the risk of fire for occupants and users of, and visitors to, composite buildings and domestic buildings constructed or with building plans submitted on or before 1.3.1987.

We understand that in many of these old buildings, construction of new works in meeting the current fire safety standards may be difficult due to structural or spatial constraints. The Ordinance therefore requires the carrying out of only those improvement works which are considered essential. The specific improvement requirements stipulated in a fire safety direction are also drawn up in a like spirit following inspection of the building concerned.

A reasonable period will be specified to allow sufficient time for owners to complete the improvement works. To avoid unnecessary spending, owners may consider carrying out such works to fulfil the requirements together with the routine maintenance works as appropriate. Besides, there might be some constraints on construction that would make compliance with the fire safety requirements difficult. In those special circumstances, relaxation may be considered on the merits of each case, taking into account such factors as the potential fire risk, floor layout, nature of uses, actual occupancy, combustible materials, etc.

Some examples of possible relaxation that may be accepted are given below for reference. They are, however, by no means exhaustive. Other improvement works or alternative methods may be acceptable provided that a reasonable level of fire safety is achieved.

A) Non-domestic Portion of Composite Building (overall building height not exceeding 6 storeys)

● Automatic Sprinkler System

- Will not be required if the aggregate area of the non-domestic floors does not exceed 230 m².
- Should there be structural or spatial constraints for retrofitting a standard sprinkler system, an improvised sprinkler system with a direct town's main water connection (applicable to the non-domestic portion of a height not exceeding 15 m), a connection from the existing fire hydrant/hose reel system or a sprinkler water tank of a reduced capacity may be considered acceptable.

(Note – For an improvised sprinkler system, the system alarm shall be connected to the Fire Services Communications Centre of Fire Services Department by direct telephone line.)

e.g. ~ If there is limitation on floor loading or insufficient space to accommodate a new water tank due to ownership problem.

● Fire Hydrant System

- Will not be required if direct vehicular access to the major face of the building is available.

● Hose reel System

- Should there be structural or spatial constraints, or other difficulties in providing a standard hose reel system, hose reel tubing of reduced length (i.e. hose reel drums of smaller size) or installation of hose reel drums at high level positions may be considered acceptable.

e.g. ~ If the standard provision would entail the narrowing of the means of escape to an effective width below the minimum acceptable standard.

e.g. ~ If the space at common area/staircase enclosure is insufficient to accommodate the hose reel drums.

- Fire extinguishers may be acceptable in place of a hose reel system if substantial difficulties are encountered in providing such improvised hose reels.

e.g. ~ If the means of escape will still be seriously obstructed after the installation of the hose reel system.

● Emergency Lighting

- Will not be required for separately occupied area/room which is less than 8 m² in area for accommodating a limited number of staff and located adjacent to exit routes with emergency lighting.

B) Non-domestic Portion of Composite Building (overall building height more than 6 storeys)

● Automatic Sprinkler System

- Will not be required if the aggregate area of the non-domestic floors does not exceed 230 m².
- Should there be structural or spatial constraints for retrofitting a standard sprinkler system, an improvised sprinkler system with a direct town's main water connection (applicable to the non-domestic portion of a height not exceeding 15m), a connection from the existing fire hydrant/hose reel system or a sprinkler water tank of a reduced capacity may be considered acceptable.

(Note – For an improvised sprinkler system, the system alarm shall be connected to the Fire Services Communications Centre of Fire Services Department by direct telephone line.)

e.g. ~ If there is limitation on floor loading or insufficient space to accommodate a new water tank due to ownership problem.

● Hose Reel System

- Should there be structural or spatial constraints, or other difficulties in providing a standard hose reel system, hose reel tubing of reduced length (i.e. hose reel drums of smaller size) or installation of hose reel drums at high level positions may be considered acceptable.

e.g. ~ If the standard provision would entail the narrowing of the means of escape to an effective width below the minimum acceptable standard.

e.g. ~ If the space at common area/staircase enclosure is insufficient to accommodate the hose reel drums.

● Emergency Lighting

- Will not be required for separately occupied area/room which is less than 8 m² in area for accommodating a limited number of staff and located adjacent to exit routes with emergency lighting.

C) Domestic Building or Domestic Portion of Composite Building (overall building height not exceeding 6 storeys)

● Fire Hydrant System

- Will not be required if direct vehicular access to the major face of the building is available.

- Hose Reel System

- Should there be structural or spatial constraints, or other difficulties in providing a standard hose reel system, hose reel tubing of reduced length (i.e. hose reel drums of smaller size) or installation of hose reel drums at high level positions may be considered acceptable.

e.g. ~ If the standard provision would entail the narrowing of the means of escape to an effective width below the minimum acceptable standard.

e.g. ~ If the space at common area/staircase enclosure is insufficient to accommodate the hose reel drums.

- Fire extinguishers may be acceptable in place of a hose reel system if substantial difficulties are encountered in providing such improvised hose reels.

e.g. ~ If the means of escape will still be seriously obstructed after the installation of the improvised hose reel system.

D) Domestic Building or Domestic Portion of Composite Building (overall building height more than 6 storeys)

- Hose Reel System


- Should there be structural or spatial constraints, or other difficulties in providing a standard hose reel system, hose reel tubing of reduced length (i.e. hose reel drums of smaller size) or installation of hose reel drums at high level positions may be considered acceptable.

e.g. ~ If the standard provision would entail the narrowing of the means of escape to an effective width below the minimum acceptable standard.

e.g. ~ If the space at common area/staircase enclosure is insufficient to accommodate the hose reel drums.

This Department will continue to adopt a flexible and pragmatic approach in handling cases in which owners encounter practical difficulties in complying with the new fire safety standards. Should you have any questions on this Circular Letter, please contact the Senior Divisional Officer of the Building Improvement and Support Division at 2272 9177.

Yours faithfully,


(Aaron Y.C. CHEUNG)
for Director of Fire Services