Brief Notes of Liaison Meeting between Fire Services Department (FSD) and the Authorized Persons (APs)

Date : 12 June 2019 (Wednesday)
Time : 1600 hours
Venue : Conference Room, Fire Safety Command, FSD

Matters Discussed in the Meeting :

1. ***Registered Fire Engineer (RFE) Scheme***

For the sustainable development of RFE Scheme, it would be more advantageous if there were dedicated top-up courses provided by local tertiary institutions. Against this background, liaison meetings with local tertiary institutions were held in January and February 2019. During the meetings, local tertiary institutions indicated that it was feasible for them to provide dedicated top-up courses for bridging the qualification of interested participants to be registered as RFE.

Matters related to the top-up courses would be put up to the Registration Committee (RC) for discussion as one of the functions of RC is to advise the Director of Fire Services on the assessment criteria in relation to RFE Scheme and the RC would comprise FSD officers and members from the professional bodies and academia.

2. ***General Building Plan (GBP) Submission and FSI Acceptance Inspection***

Performance Indicators

The figures related to the performance indicators for GBP processed and FSI acceptance inspection for New Projects Division, Airport Expansion Project Division and Railway Development Strategy Division were presented. There were no comments from APs on the performance indicators presented.

Repeated Irregularities Found in GBP Submission / during Acceptance Inspection

A number of repeated irregularities was noted in recent GBP submissions and during recent acceptance inspections:

(i) Amendments made in previous submissions were not incorporated in the latest submission;
(ii) FS Notes amendments were not highlighted/ underlined;
(iii) The standards of system in FS Notes were missed;
(iv) Inclusion of notes which were not related to FSI in FS Notes; and
(v) The alterations and additions (A&A) area/ submission areas were not clearly delineated / colored on plans.

The Building Improvement Divisions would process GBPs for A&A works under Fire Safety (Commercial Premises) Ordinance, Cap.502 or Fire Safety (Buildings) Ordinance, Cap.572. It came to their attention that some APs would submit separate GBPs for different A&A works under the same FSI system, e.g. submitting one GBP for structural works involving water tank and another GBP for FS pumps, which were both under the same FH/HR system of the same premises. To facilitate building owners to comply with the fire safety directions, APs were strongly advised to incorporate all necessary fire safety requirements stipulated in the fire safety directions in one go in order to minimize the total number of submissions required for processing in a single project.

The Chairman drew APs' attention to the importance of sending the submissions to the right office of this Department for processing in order not to lengthening the unnecessary processing time and reminded them to bring the above observations back to respective professional bodies.

The Role of AP's Representative during FSI Acceptance Inspection

In every FSI acceptance inspection, APs would be requested to answer the queries raised by the Inspection Officer (IO) with a view to facilitating the smooth and efficient inspection process, it was acceptable for APs to delegate his responsibilities to his/her representative to attend the acceptance inspection on behalf of them. However, it was found in some occasions that the representative(s) was unable to provide project information instantly when needed which eventually resulted in a delay in the whole FSI inspection process. APs were advised to ensure that all their representatives should have to be familiar with the project design and could fully represent them in responding to the questions raised by the IO.

The Chairman emphazised that the attendance of APs or RFSICs, who were familiar with the project development, was crucial to FSI acceptance inspection. He advised all APs to remind their members to take note of the above observations.

3. ***Inspection, Maintenance, Modification and Repair of Fire Service Installations and Equipment***

A brief introduction on an advisory letter concerning FSI shutdown procedures and proper maintenance of moving parts of FSI system, which was issued to Registered Fire Service Installation Contractors (RFSICs) on 19.3.2019, was given. The advisory letter was also provided to APs for reference and circulation. APs were reminded that the guidelines stated in the advisory letter should be strictly observed.

The Chairman advised that preventive measures should be taken before the shutdown of FSI and reminded all APs that instead of visual inspection, detailed checking and testing should be carried out in the annual FSI inspection, particularly for those premises with fire engineering approach adopted, to ensure that all the FSI were in efficient working order.

4. ***Checklists for Inspection, Testing and Maintenance of FSI***

For the purpose of offering guidelines for FSI annual inspection or maintenance procedures, “Inspection, Testing and Maintenance Checklists” in respect of Fire Hydrant / Hose Reel Systems and Supply Tanks specifying the maintenance and testing requirements would be introduced. Views and comments amongst relevant parties / stakeholders on the contents of the draft checklists were being collected. Checklists for other systems would also be introduced in due course.

5. ***FSI Acceptance Inspection – Water Sampling Test***

In response to a member’s enquiry on whether water sampling test was a prerequisite for issuance of fire certificate, APs were advised that water sampling test for fire services water supply was not FSD’s

requirements regardless of the type of premises. Besides, APs' attention were drawn that fire certificate would be issued as long as the Fire Service Completion Advice from the Water Authority had been issued or applied for except for the capacity of the sprinkler tank of inflow dependent type.

6. ***FSI Acceptance Inspection – Standard Templates of Certificates***

In response to a member's request for standard templates of certificates to be signed by APs, APs were advised that the undertaking letters to be prepared by APs during acceptance inspection aimed to facilitate document checking on the compliance of statutory requirements. In view of different building types and their respective FSI provision requirements, APs were recommended to tailor-make an undertaking letter for each individual project to cater project-specific needs.

7. ***Submission of Ventilation / Air-conditioning (V/AC) Control Systems***

Regarding the processing time of VAC submissions, APs were advised that depending on the quality and number of submissions received within the same period of time, the processing time of V/AC submissions would generally be around one calendar month. FSD noted the industry's concern and had flexibly arranged necessary resources to retain a reasonable response time for processing V/AC submissions. FSD would closely monitor the progress.

The Chairman welcomed all APs to provide their valuable comments or feedback on this issue for further improvement.

8. ***Review of Hazard Classification of Sprinkler System Installation for A&A work***

It was noted that for some A&A works, FSI system installations had to be altered to fit the spatial/ function requirement. Given that FSI 314A drawing submission would be passed to FSD for record purpose only, it was important for APs/RFSICs to ensure that such A&A works fully met FSD's requirements. APs/RFSICs should be aware of any changes in the usage of the room or premises, which might affect the fundamental requirements of FSI. For example, the change of usage

of a premises from “restaurant” to “department store” would involve the change of the hazard classification of sprinkler installation from OH I to OH III, which in turn would affect the whole sprinkler installation installed in the building, and such changes might be not feasible. Owners should be well informed about the technical cost and other implications arising from the change in use of buildings.

9. ***FS System Provision in Cabinet and Pipe/Cable Duct***

In some FS notes of GBP drawings submitted by APs, FSI provisions, e.g. sprinkler system, detection system and emergency lighting, were exempted for small spaces such as cabinet and pipe or cable duct. However, it was found in FS acceptance inspection that some so-called ‘cabinet or pipe duct’ were quite large in physical dimension (e.g. 3m x 4m), which should be considered as a plant room instead of a cabinet.

If FSI provisions were absent for those big cabinets or pipe ducts, it could constitute potential fire hazard from the fire safety point of view. APs were strongly advised to pay special attention to the actual size of cabinet or duct space in their designs and provide suitable FSI according to the requirements of the Code of Practice for Minimum Fire Service Installations and Equipment.

10. ***Location and Capacity of the Fuel Tank Room (FTR) for Genset***

In accordance with the guidelines "Do's and Don'ts for Siting and Design of Fuel Tank Room for Emergency Generators", the aggregate quantity of the fuel oil in FTR(s) on the same floor should not exceed 2,500 litres. A member enquired that if any exemption would be given if the two fuel tanks, with 2,500 litres of fuel oil in each tank, were 100 metres or more apart on a roof floor of a logistic building.

The Chairman replied that the principle of the mentioned requirement was to control the total fire load on each floor inside the building. The more flammable materials to be kept in the building, the higher the fire load, and therefore the faster a fire would spread, which in turn increasing the potential of the fire size as well as the amount of heat it could generate. Moreover, fire-fighting and rescue operations in a high-rise building involving dangerous goods (DG) would be more complicated and dangerous. Storage of DG above the ground floor

level should be minimized and strictly controlled to uphold the overall fire safety.

If it was necessary to maintain more than 2,500 litres of fuel oil in the FTR, the concerned FTR could be re-located on ground floor or designed in the form of an underground fuel tank, which were commonly adopted in Hong Kong.

11. ***Provision of Operation and Maintenance Service in respect of the Computerized Fire Alarm Transmission System (CFATS)***

Regarding the service providers of the CFATS, APs were advised that three service providers had been authorized by FSD to provide CFATS service and to maintain and operate the system for a period of three years from May 2019.

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