

Meeting with Mini-storages Trade on 8.7.2016

Date / Time : 8.7.2016 / 1000 hours

Venue : Room 601, South Wing, 6/F, Fire Services Headquarters
Building, 1 Hong Chong Road, Tsimshatsui East

Present

Government Representatives (7 persons)

Fire Services Department

Buildings Department

Labour Department

Lands Department

Mini-storages Trade Representatives

Members of Self Storage Association Asia(SSAA) (11 persons)

Non-members of SSAA (with 15 storages or above) (4 persons)

Salient Points of the Meeting

Introduction

- The fire occurred in an industrial building at Ngau Tau Kok Road manifested serious risks associated with mini-storages.
- The Government would take follow-up actions on three fronts:
 - First, Government Departments would inspect mini-storages in Hong Kong and take enforcement actions against any breach of the existing laws;
 - Second, the Government would be in touch with members of the trade to better understand the operation of such premises and to discuss with them short-term and medium term measures to enhance fire safety;
 - Third, the Government would study how to enhance fire safety of old industrial buildings and strengthen statutory control over mini-storages.

Stance of the Government

- had a common goal with the community to eradicate fire safety hazards in mini-storages;
- determined to tackle the problem and appealed for the operators full collaboration so that the trade could grow healthily and steadily;
- held the view that public safety was of paramount importance though operators had their business concerns;
- advocated upgrade fire safety provisions in industrial buildings and to tighten statutory control over mini-storages through amending existing legislations or introducing new legislations in the long run.

Problems identified in the inspections by Government Departments

- alteration/obstruction of existing openable windows;
- undesirable fire load segregation arising from existing arrangement of storage cubicles/areas;
- insufficient coverage of hose reel system;
- insufficient provision of exit signs and/or directional signs;
- obstruction to exits by unsatisfactory locking devices;
- extensive partitioning of storage cubicles resulting in excessive travel distance to escape staircases;
- cubicle doors opening outwards reducing the effective width of means of escape;
- replacement of existing fire-rated doors with inadequate fire resisting performance.

Advice from the Government

- provision of management/security staff;
- implementation of measures for preventing the storage of dangerous goods;
- provision of basic fire safety training to management/security staff;
- implementation of good housekeeping measures including the safety of power supply and electrical installation;
- ensuring proper maintenance and efficient working order of the fire service installations and equipment (FSI);
- engaging building professionals for rectifying the irregularities voluntarily;
- choosing suitable premises for mini-storages for complying with the laws is important.

Responses from the trade

- expressed their willingness to cooperate with the Government to enhance the safety of mini-storages;
- agreed to implement immediate management measures to uplift the safe operation of mini-storages with a view to re-building customers' confidence;
- appealed for more time for them to comply with the orders for rectification works due to the need to notify the affected clients;
- suggested Government departments concerned to maintain sufficient and adequate consultation and communication with the trade;
- commented that stringent regulatory measures should not pinpoint on the mini-storages having regard to other non-permitted uses in industrial buildings;
- expressed the practical difficulties to install or upgrade the FSI as some operators were not the owners of the premises.

Fire safety measures suggested by Self Storage Association Asia

- providing adequate exit signs, emergency lights, fire extinguishers, smoke detectors, exit route maps and floor plan;
- enhancing fire safety training for staff/operators;
- arranging more inspections and audit to facilities;
- re-circulating the self-regulatory code of practice to the trade to observe.

Responses from the Government

- FSD recommended the trade to require service users to sign declaration so as to prevent/prohibit the storage of dangerous goods;
- FSD would offer assistance in providing fire safety training to staff of the

trade;

- the trade should include fire safety measures in the self-regulatory code of practice to the trade to observe;
- the trade should initiate good house-keeping measures to rebuild customers' confidence of using mini-storages;
- FSD would coordinate further dialogues with the trade with the next meeting to be held in around two months' time tentatively (i.e. after completing the territory-wide mini-storages inspection);
- the trade could also approach FSD to jack up meeting to discuss matters of urgency/pressing importance.