

**Business Facilitation Advisory Committee  
Task Force on Business Liaison Groups (BLGTF)**

*Measures to facilitate licence application  
for premises located in old composite buildings*

**Background**

Provision of a sprinkler system forms part of the licensing requirements for premises such as restaurants with an area exceeding 230 square metres or at basement with an area exceeding 126 square metres. However, it may not be feasible to install fire service water tanks for the sprinkler systems for premises located in old composite buildings<sup>1</sup> due to structural or spatial constraints. To facilitate meeting the licensing requirement, the Fire Services Department (FSD) allows adoption of alternative proposals, i.e., the installation of improvised sprinkler systems with direct town main water connection or a connection from the existing fire hydrant/hose reel systems.

**Trades' Concerns**

2. To install the said type of improvised sprinkler system with direct town main water connection, it is necessary to make applications to FSD for the eligibility of its installation, then to the Water Supplies Department (WSD) for water supply, which in turn will apply to the Highways Department (HyD) for an excavation permit for the water connection works. The relatively long lead time of the whole process would increase the cost of obtaining a licence, rendering these premises unattractive to business operators which could reduce their interest to choose these sites for business.

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<sup>1</sup> Referring to buildings constructed, or intended to be used, (i) partly for domestic purposes and partly for non-domestic purposes; or (ii) for domestic purposes with more than three storeys; and constructed on or before 1st March 1987, or building works with plans first submitted to the Building Authority for approval on or before 1st March 1987.

## Administration's Response

3. To address the trades' concerns, FSD, WSD and HyD have jointly devised the following measures after carefully reviewing the whole process with an aim to shortening the lead time required –

- (a) ***Parallel processing of applicants' submissions to FSD and their enquiries to WSD on water pressure*** – Applicants can enquire WSD for confirmation of water pressure (a pre-requisite for FSD to vet the application for the installation of the said sprinkler system) simultaneously with the applications to FSD for the eligibility for its installation. WSD will provide the information on the water pressure as soon as possible;
- (b) ***Flexible vetting of plans*** – FSD can flexibly vet fire service installation (FSI) plans on individual systems for the same premises on a first-come-first-served basis. As such, to speed up the process of installation of a sprinkler system, applicants can choose to submit FSI plans for the sprinkler system separately from other systems or requirements<sup>2</sup>;
- (c) ***Parallel vetting of the application for water supply and eligibility for installation of the improvised sprinkler system*** – Currently, WSD will process the application for water supply after FSD's endorsement on the eligibility of the installation of an improvised sprinkler system. Moreover, WSD will register the works with HyD and apply for the excavation permit<sup>3</sup> after giving approval to the plumbing proposal. To speed up the process, WSD will provide the following business facilitation measures:

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<sup>2</sup> Some old composite buildings are issued with the Fire Safety Directions under the Fire Safety (Buildings) Ordinance (Cap.572). The FSI plans to be submitted under the Fire Safety Directions include other systems such as the fire hydrant/hose reel systems; manual fire alarm systems; ventilation/air conditioning control systems.

<sup>3</sup> WSD will issue demand notes to the applicant on the fees for the water connection works (including excavation permit (XP) fees) when giving approval to the plumbing proposal, and then register the works with HyD and apply for the XP upon settlement of the fees by the applicant. After registration of works, WSD is required to coordinate with other applicants based on advice given by HyD and submit documents to departments concerned for vetting in order to enable processing of the XP application.

- ***Vetting the plumbing proposal before FSD's endorsement on eligibility:*** WSD will start processing an application for water supply for an improvised sprinkler system even though the applicant's submission is not accompanied by a FSD's endorsement on the eligibility for its installation. WSD will give a conditional approval to the applicant's plumbing proposal<sup>4</sup> upon completion of the vetting. With regard to the conditional approval, WSD will allow the applicant to proceed with the proposal once being notified of the FSD's endorsement. If the applicant has engaged a licensed plumber at the time of the submission of the plumbing proposal, the licensed plumber engaged can choose to submit the application for commencement of plumbing works (i.e. WWO 46 Part I and II) immediately to further streamline the application process;
  - ***Advancing registration of excavation works*** – WSD will register their excavation works with HyD as soon as the location of the water connection point has been ascertained during the vetting of applicant's plumbing proposal in respect of improvised sprinkler system so as to enable early processing of the application for the excavation permit after the applicant has settled the fees; and
- (d) ***Enhancing licensing guides*** – To facilitate the trade to make informed decision on the choice of a suitable premises, FSD will propose amendments to related licensing guides (such as that for restaurant licences) to remind the licence applicants to examine the possible need of installing a sprinkler system and related matters; the aforementioned enhancement measures will also be incorporated into these guides such that the licence applicants could have an understanding on how to install an improvised sprinkler system more speedily.

4. Besides the above measures, to facilitate the preparation of quality FSI plans and plumbing proposals, a crucial element for a smooth and speedy vetting, FSD and WSD have provided a checklist on the major defects of FSI plan submission on FSD's website and those of plumbing proposals on WSD's

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<sup>4</sup> Upon receipt of such application, WSD will take the initiative to ask FSD whether its endorsement will be given to the applicant's proposal; WSD will also take the initiative to inform FSD of the conditional approval (final approval subject to FSD's endorsement on the installation of the improvised sprinkler system) of the plumbing proposal.

publication. Towards the same end, FSD has been providing seminars and pre-submission enquiry service on the installation of improvised sprinkler systems to consultants and/or registered fire service installation contractors.

5. It is expected that the above measures will help expedite the processing of installing an improvised sprinkler system proposals to meet the licensing requirement for premises located in old composite buildings. The measures have either been implemented or will be implemented as soon as practicable within 2018-19. FSD and WSD will inform relevant trade stakeholders such as the fire services consultants, registered fire service installation contractors and licensed plumbers etc., so that they would tie in with the new procedures for reaping of the intended benefits.

### **Way Forward**

6. Members are invited to note the content of this paper and offer comments, if any.

Fire Services Department  
Water Supplies Department  
Highways Department  
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