

# NEWS RELEASE



## FIRE, EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES AND ENFORCEMENT STATISTICS 2019

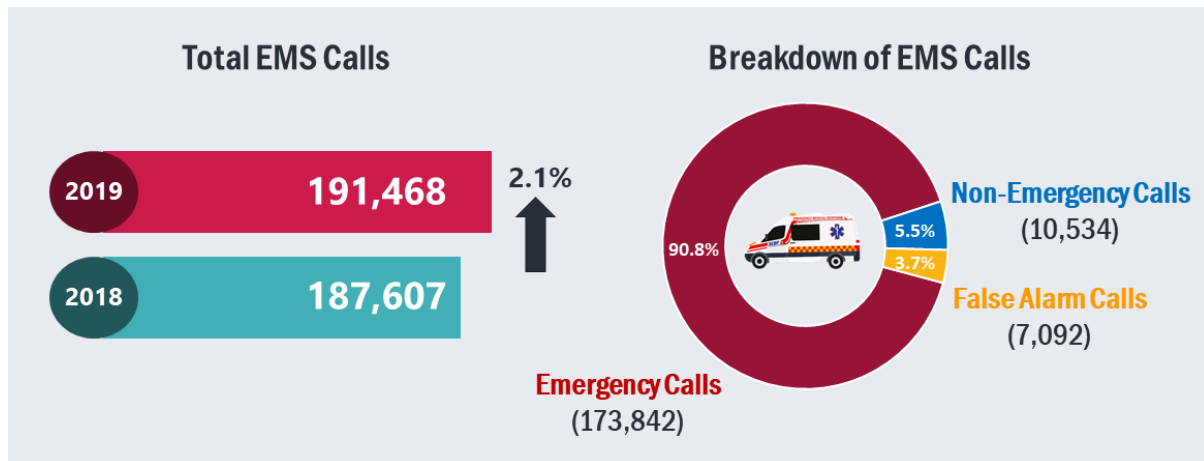
### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**The number of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) calls continued to increase in 2019.** The Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) responded to **191,468** EMS calls last year, an average of about 520 calls a day. This was an increase of 2.1% from 2018, and continues the upward trend since 1998. Non-emergency and false alarm calls remain an area of concern as they constituted 9.2% of EMS calls. SCDF will continue its efforts to raise public awareness of the differences between emergency and non-emergency cases.

2. **The overall number of fire incidents increased by 7.8% in 2019.** In particular, there was an increase in fires involving personal mobility devices, and this is another area of concern. SCDF will continue to work closely with our partners and stakeholders to increase public awareness on how to prevent fires.

3. **SCDF conducted 13,397 fire safety enforcement checks in 2019** and issued 2,045 Notices of Fire Safety Offences and 2,487 Fire Hazard Abatement Notices. SCDF will continue its public education efforts to encourage the public to report fire hazards that they come across.

## Overview



SCDF responded to 191,468 EMS calls in 2019. This was an increase of 2.1% or 3,861, from 187,607 in 2018. Out of the total EMS calls, emergency calls increased by 2.5% to 173,842 in 2019, from 169,653 in 2018. Non-emergency calls increased by 1.3% to 10,534 in 2019, from 10,398 in 2018 while the number of false alarm calls decreased by 6.1% to 7,092 in 2019, from 7,556 in 2018.<sup>1</sup>

2. Of the 173,842 emergency calls received in 2019, 76.3% were medical-related (e.g. chest pain, breathlessness, unconsciousness and cardiac arrest); 17.7% were trauma cases (e.g. industrial accidents, falls and assaults); and the remaining 6% were related to road traffic accidents. The number of calls involving the elderly (aged 65 and above) remained the highest among all age categories, at 43.8%.

### Area of Concern: Non-emergency and False Alarm Calls

3. Non-emergency and false alarm calls constituted 9.2% (17,626 calls) of all EMS calls in 2019. This means that on average, SCDF responded to around 48 non-emergency and false alarm calls every day. While this was a decrease of 1.8% from 2018, non-emergency and false alarm cases still required the deployment of SCDF resources which could otherwise have been dispatched to attend to emergency cases which could be life-threatening. SCDF will continue to raise public awareness of the differences between emergency and non-emergency cases as part of SCDF's intensive public education efforts on its tiered EMS response framework, to bring down the numbers of such calls.

### Update on SCDF'S EMS Tiered Response Framework (Phase 1 and 2)

4. Since the introduction of the tiered EMS response framework on 1 April 2017, SCDF 995 Operations Centre specialists have been triaging EMS calls to assess the severity of each case, with priority given to life-threatening cases. More fire and rescue specialists were cross-trained as Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) and deployed to respond to life-threatening cases. In 2019, SCDF was able to respond to 82.1% of life-threatening cases within eight minutes due to the faster arrival of EMTs

<sup>1</sup> Non-emergency calls are cases where SCDF found that urgent medical assistance was not required, including cases where patients were either uninjured or had no medical complaints. False alarm calls include incidents where no patients were found at the incident scene

on board firefighting vehicles such as the Red Rhino. Without such deployment, it would be 74.4%.

5. Phase 2 of the EMS response framework commenced on 1 April 2019. The two key features in Phase 2 are as follows:

a) High Performance CPR for Cardiac Arrest Cases

SCDF implemented high-performance cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) to improve the chances of survival for victims who suffer out-of-hospital cardiac arrest (OHCA).

In such cases, more EMTs are dispatched to render prompt medical treatment and they conduct well-coordinated high performance CPR on victims, together with ambulance responders. EMTs are deployed across a wide range of firefighting vehicles, such as the Red Rhinos and fire engines.

From April to December 2019, SCDF's high performance CPR capabilities attended to about 1,000 suspected OHCA victims.

b) Non-conveyance Policy

Cases that are assessed by SCDF as non-emergencies would not be conveyed to hospitals. There were 945 such non-emergency cases between April and December 2019. The individuals concerned were advised to seek treatment at a clinic or to call 1777 for a non-emergency ambulance at a fee. This policy enables SCDF resources to be deployed only for serious emergencies.

SCDF will continue to improve public awareness of the non-conveyance policy and its rationale.

## **Community First Responders for Cardiac Arrest Cases**

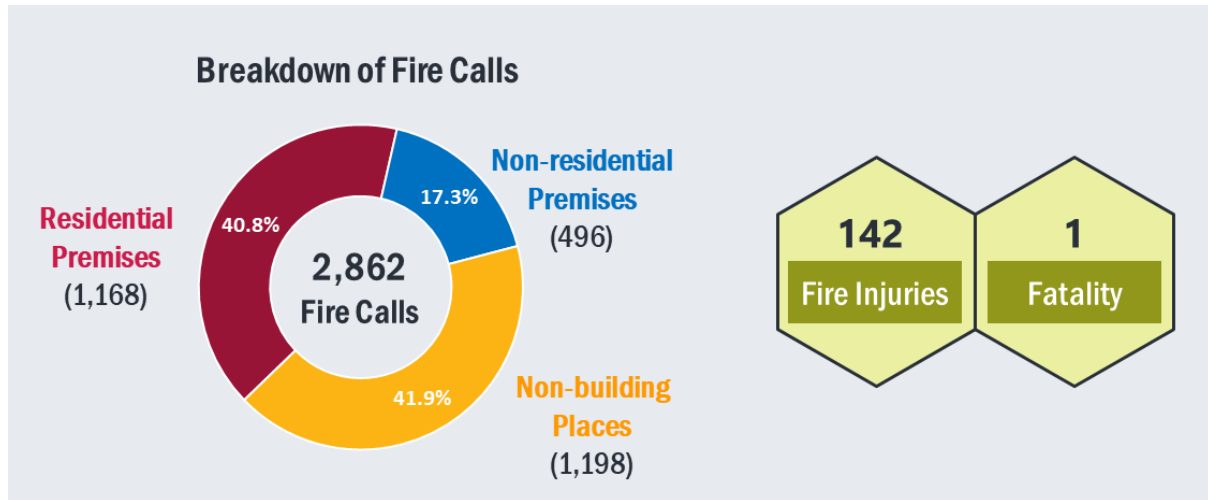
6. SCDF, in collaboration with the Ministry Of Health, Singapore Heart Foundation, and People's Association, launched the Save-A-Life (SAL) initiative in 2015. The SAL initiative aims to enhance community first response to increase the survival rates of cardiac arrest victims in Singapore. To date, more than 4,900 Automatic External Defibrillators (AEDs) have been installed island-wide and more than half a million persons have been trained in CPR-AED skills.

8. The SCDF myResponder mobile app that was launched in April 2015 alerts members of the public who have signed up as Community First Responders (CFRs) to cardiac arrest cases near them, and provides the location of the nearest AEDs. This allows the CFRs to administer life-saving CPR to victims before the arrival of emergency responders.

9. Since its launch, the myResponder app has been downloaded more than 143,000 times, and has a network of around 4,800 active CFRs. In 2019, SCDF sent out alerts for 3,917 suspected cardiac arrest cases, with 1,366 CFRs responding to these incidents.

10. Empowering CFRs to respond to such incidents prior to SCDF emergency responders' arrival increases the survival rates of cardiac arrest victims. We thank our CFRs for stepping up to help in times of need, and encourage members of the public to step forward and sign up as CFRs.

## Overview



SCDF responded to 2,862 fire calls in 2019, an increase of 7.8% from 2,656 in 2018.<sup>2</sup> Vegetation fires made up a significant share of the fires in 2019 at 30.9%, increased by 50.2% from 2018, and is the reason why overall fire calls increased by 7.8% in 2019.

2. Dropped light cases remained the leading cause of fires accounting for 1,050 cases (36.7%) of all fires in 2019.<sup>3</sup> Fires caused by electrical origin was the second highest, with 661 cases (23.1%).
3. There were 142 fire injuries in 2019, an increase from 90 in 2018. 84 (59.2%) of them were smoke inhalation cases while the remaining 58 (40.8%) had suffered burns. The majority of the fire injuries occurred in residential buildings.
4. There was one fire fatality in 2019, as compared to four in 2018.

### Fires in Residential Premises

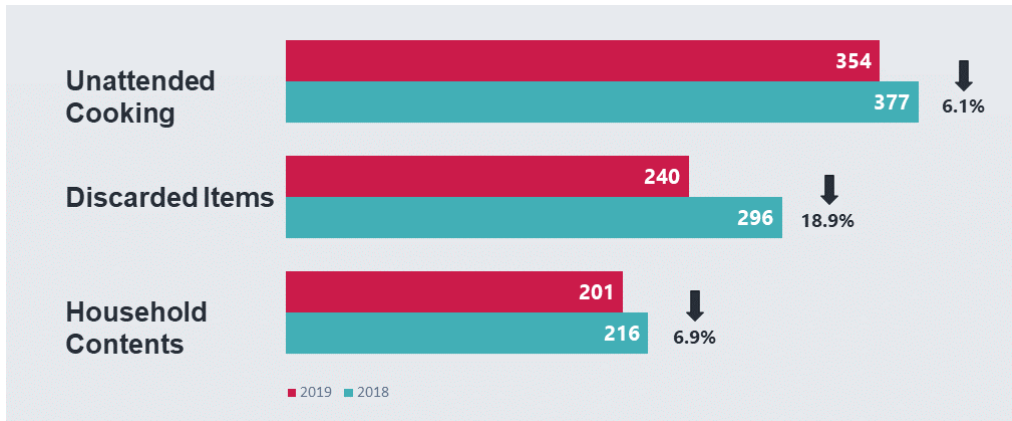
5. 1,168 fire incidents occurred in residential premises (private and public) in 2019.<sup>4</sup> The top three types of fire in residential premises are reflected in [Chart 1](#).

<sup>2</sup> The total number of fire calls for 2019 exclude fire incidents involving rubbish (including rubbish chute) fires, unlike for previous years. Rubbish fires are very low risk relatively to other fires. The exclusion of rubbish fires will provide a more accurate state of fire safety in Singapore, without the fire statistics being inflated by incidents of low severity.

<sup>3</sup> Dropped light refers to the indiscriminate disposal of lighted materials such as lighted cigarette butts that were not completely extinguished, embers from charcoal and lighted incense sticks.

<sup>4</sup> In 2019, there was a decrease of fire incidents in residential premises by 5.4% from 1,235 in 2018 (excluding rubbish fires).

Chart 1: Top three types of fires in residential premises



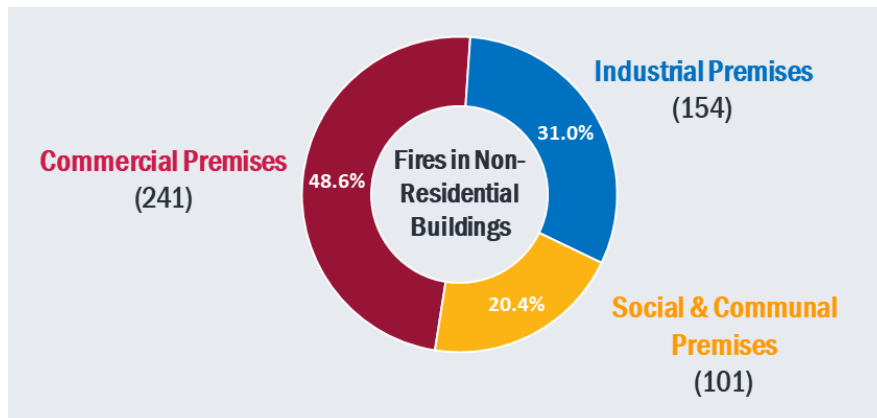
6. Unattended cooking fires, which formed the largest component of fires in residential buildings, decreased by 6.1% to 354 cases in 2019, from 377 cases in 2018. Fire incidents involving discarded items and household contents decreased as well.

7. SCDF would like to remind members of the public not to leave their cooking unattended, and not to discard items at the common areas such as lift lobbies, common corridors and staircase landings. Such discarded items not only pose a fire risk but may obstruct people who are evacuating the area during an emergency.

**Fires in Non-Residential Premises**

8. In 2019, SCDF responded to 496 fire incidents in non-residential premises (commercial, industrial, social and communal).<sup>5</sup> The breakdown of fires in non-residential premises is in Chart 2.

Chart 2: Breakdown of fires at non-residential premises



9. For commercial premises, there was a 29.9% decrease in the number of fire incidents in shopping complexes and supermarkets, from 67 cases in 2018 to 47 cases in 2019. For industrial premises, fires in factories saw a decrease of 20% to 48 cases in 2019, from 60 cases in 2018.

<sup>5</sup> For fire incidents in non-residential premises (excluding rubbish fires) in 2019, there was an increase of 0.2% from 495 in 2018.

10. SCDF will continue to engage building owners and fire safety managers (FSMs) to ensure that their premises remain fire-safe, with the support of the National Fire and Civil Emergency Preparedness Council (NFEC). One such platform is the annual NFEC Fire Safety Seminar, which is attended by FSMs and other building fire safety practitioners. SCDF will also continue its enforcement checks at commercial and industrial premises to ensure that there are no fire safety infringements.

**Fires in Non-Building Places**

11. There were 1,198 fire incidents in non-building premises (e.g. vegetation and vehicles) in 2019.<sup>6</sup> The number of vegetation fires in 2019 had increased by 50.2% to 883, from 588 in 2018. This was largely due to the sustained dry weather between January and March 2019 as well as between July and September 2019.

12. To address the increase in vegetation fires, SCDF will continue to work closely with the Wildfire Task Force, which comprises members from relevant agencies such as the Singapore Land Authority, the National Environment Agency, the National Parks Board and PUB. The Wildfire Task Force has been stepping up preventive measures, such as maintaining fire breaks and trimming overgrown vegetation at high-risk areas. Patrols at fire hot spots will also be increased during dry periods to detect possible fire risks and promptly attend to any fire occurrences.

13. The number of vehicle fires decreased by 11.8% to 195 in 2019, from 221 cases in 2018. SCDF will continue to use its social media platforms to share tips on preventing and handling a vehicle fire.

**Area of Concern: Fires Involving Personal Mobility Devices**

14. In 2019, there were 102 fires involving Personal Mobility Devices (PMD). This was a sharp increase of 96.2% from 52 cases in 2018, and has been on a continuing upward trend since 2015 (see Chart 3 below). Fires involving Power Assisted Bicycles (PAB) decreased by 40.9% from 22 cases in 2018 to 13 cases in 2019.

Chart 3: Fires involving PMDs over the last 5 years (2015 – 2019)



<sup>6</sup> For fire incidents in non-building places (excluding rubbish fires) in 2019, there was an increase of 29.4% from 926 in 2018, largely due to vegetation fires.

15. SCDF urges members of the public, especially PMD owners, to be vigilant when handling their devices as fires involving PMDs and PABs can result in casualties and serious damage to property. There were 46 fire injuries (including one fatality) from these fires, and this represents a 76.9% increase from 26 injuries in 2018. In 2019, 78 fires or 67.8% of the fires involving PMDs and PABs occurred at residential premises.

16. SCDF will continue to profile such fires on its social media platforms and in the mainstream media to highlight the fire safety risks associated with PMDs and PABs, and educate the public on measures that owners can take to reduce these risks. All owners of non-UL2272 certified PMDs should also dispose of their devices at designated disposal points.

### **Community First Responders for Minor Rubbish Fires**

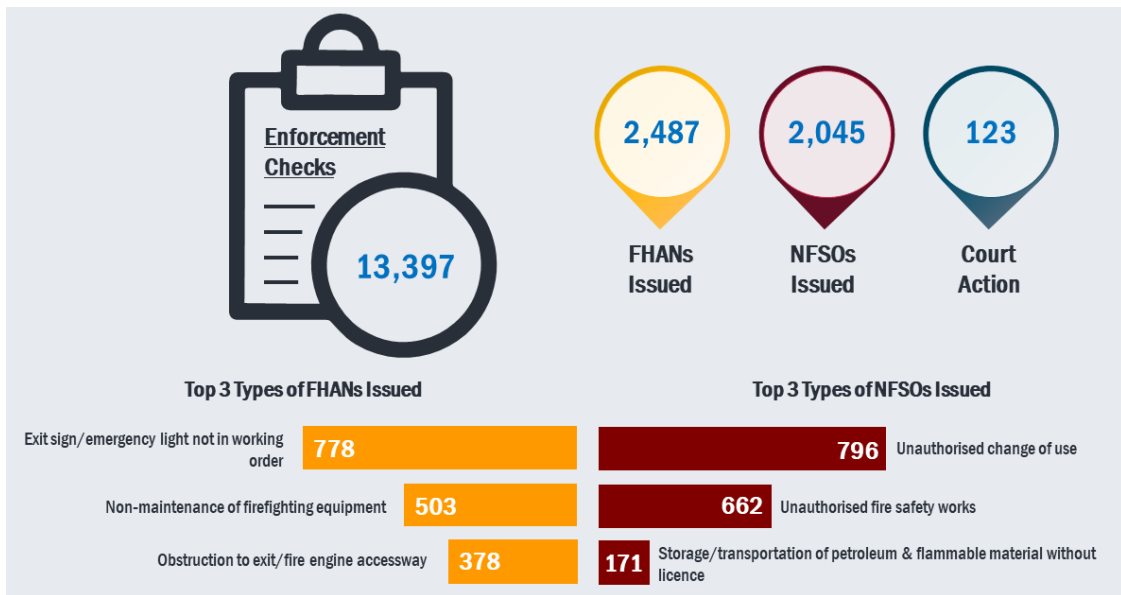
17. Rubbish fires in rubbish chutes and bins are generally small in scale and pose little risk of spreading or threat to human life. Such fires can be easily put out by members of the public. Since 2016, SCDF has been working towards getting members of the public to extinguish these minor fires. In 2019, about 40% of rubbish fires were put out by members of the public prior to SCDF's arrival at the scene.

18. In 2018, SCDF launched the Community First Responder (Fire) scheme as part of the SCDF myResponder app. This initiative alerts members of the public to minor rubbish chute and bin fires within their immediate vicinity. Currently, there are about 4,000 active responders on the myResponder platform. In 2019, SCDF sent out alerts for 1,708 rubbish fire incidents, where 918 individuals responded to these incidents.

19. Empowering CFRs to respond to such minor fires will allow SCDF resources to be deployed to attend to higher priority fire incidents. We urge more to step forward as CFRs this year.



## Overview



SCDF conducted 13,397 enforcement checks in 2019 and issued 2,487 Fire Hazard Abatement Notices (FHANs) and 2,045 Notices of Fire Safety Offences (NFSOs).<sup>7</sup>

2. The most common fire hazard in 2019 was the non-functioning of exit signs or emergency lights, which contributed to 31.3% of the total FHANs issued.

3. The most common fire safety violation was the unauthorised change of use of premises, which would cause existing fire safety measures to become inadequate. This accounted for 38.9% of the total NFSOs issued in 2019.

4. 123 cases of fire safety violations were prosecuted in Court in 2019. The majority of the offences were due to unauthorised change of use of premises (50 cases or 40.7%), followed by unauthorised fire safety works (46 cases or 37.4%). Examples of fire safety violations and the penalties meted out are as follows:

- a) A company was fined \$6,000 for the unauthorised change of use (changed part of the premises to an office/storage area without approval) and unauthorised fire safety works (involving the erection of a non-approved partition structure).
- b) A company was fined \$4,000 for unauthorised fire safety works (involving the erection of a non-approved mezzanine structure).

5. SCDF takes any non-compliance with fire safety regulations seriously and will not hesitate to take firm action against those who do not make prompt rectifications despite warnings and fines. SCDF's enforcement powers against fire safety offenders are in [Annex](#).

<sup>7</sup> Under the Fire Safety Act, a FHAN is a warning given to building owners and management to rectify fire hazards. A NFSO is issued when the contravention is of a serious nature and warrants a heavier penalty.

## **Fire Safety Feedback**

6. Members of the public are encouraged to report fire hazards they come across to SCDF. The public can do so by submitting photographs and a brief description of the fire hazard using the SCDF myResponder mobile application, by calling the fire hazard reporting line at 1800-280-0000, or by sending an email to [SCDF\\_Fire\\_Safety\\_Feedback@scdf.gov.sg](mailto:SCDF_Fire_Safety_Feedback@scdf.gov.sg).

### SCDF's Enforcement Powers against Fire Safety Offenders

Enforcement Action	Description
Fire Hazard Abatement Notice (FHAN)	Under the Fire Safety Act (FSA), the FHAN is a warning given to building owners and management to rectify fire hazards. <sup>8</sup>
Notice of Composition (NOC)	Offenders who fail to rectify the violations after being issued with FHANs will be served with an NOC of up to \$5,000.
Notice of Fire Safety Offence (NFSO)	An NFSO is issued when the contravention is of a serious nature and warrants a heavier penalty e.g. unauthorised works that may pose fire safety risks. It carries a composition fine of up to \$5,000.
Court Action	<p>Court action will be taken for serious cases. For general fire safety violations, the maximum penalty can be up to \$10,000, jail term not exceeding 6 months, or both.</p> <p>For other serious offences, such as carrying out unauthorised fire safety works, the person responsible (e.g. owner, building management, MCST) can be fined up to \$200,000 and/or jailed for a term not exceeding 24 months, and in the case of a continuing offence, to a further fine of up to \$1,000 for every day which the offence continues after conviction.</p> <p>In extreme cases, SCDF can exercise its powers to require a temporary closure of the premises.</p>

<sup>8</sup> When the new amendments to the FSA enters into force in 2020, SCDF can directly disclose an offence against any person responsible for causing a serious fire hazard without having to first issue a FHAN. Some examples of serious fire hazards include causing any fire safety measure in the building to not be in proper working order, or obstruction of escape routes or passageways within common property that may render evacuation more difficult.