

# NEWS RELEASE



**SCDF**  
The Life Saving Force

*... for a safer Singapore*

SINGAPORE CIVIL DEFENCE FORCE



## FIRE, EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES AND FIRE SAFETY ENFORCEMENT STATISTICS 2020

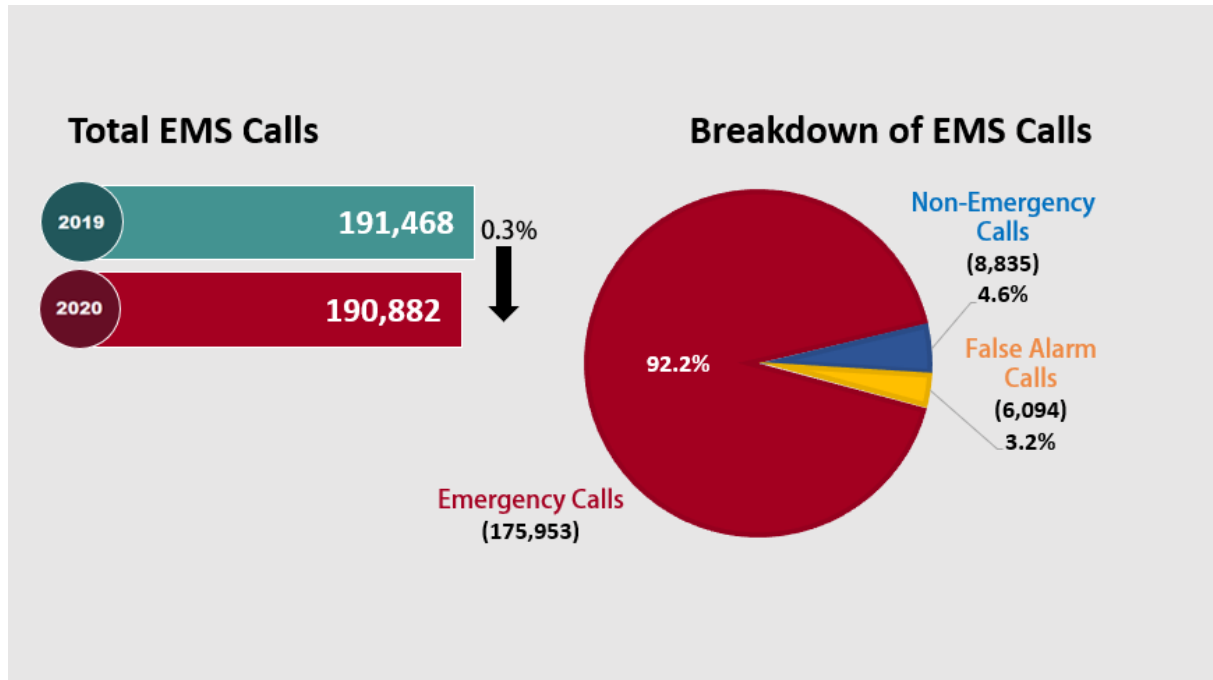
### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**The total number of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) calls decreased in 2020 for the first time in 20 years.** The Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) responded to 190,882 EMS calls last year, or about 520 calls a day. There was also a significant decrease of 16.1% and 14.1% in the number of non-emergency calls and false alarm calls respectively.

2. **The number of fire incidents decreased by 34.4% in 2020.** While the number of fires involving all types of active mobility device decreased, the number of fires involving power assisted bicycles doubled. SCDF will continue to work closely with its partners and stakeholders to raise awareness on preventing such fires.

3. **SCDF conducted 9,833 fire safety enforcement checks in 2020** and issued 1,560 Notices of Fire Safety Offences (NFSO) and 2,213 Fire Hazard Abatement Notices (FHAN). SCDF encourages the public to report any fire safety hazards that they come across.

Overview



SCDF responded to 190,882 EMS calls in 2020. Arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a surge in the number of calls involving migrant worker dormitories. There were about 4,000 calls linked to such premises, which at its peak (over several months) accounted for about 6% of the monthly call volume. In responding to these calls, SCDF EMS crews had to take extra precautions such as donning personal protective equipment (PPE) to minimise the risk of infection. In spite of this surge in calls involving dormitories, there was an overall decrease in the total number of EMS calls – a first since 2000 (refer to [Annex A](#) for the number of EMS calls from 2000 to 2020). The decrease of 0.3% or 586 calls, from 191,468 in 2019, can be attributed to the sharp decrease in non-emergency calls<sup>1</sup> and false alarm calls<sup>2</sup>, as well as a reduction of trauma (both road traffic accidents and workplace accidents) during and after the Circuit Breaker period. In addition, emergency calls saw the lowest increase at 1.2% in 2020 since 2000 (see [Annex A](#)).

**Non-Emergency and False Alarm Calls**

2. Non-emergency calls decreased significantly by 16.1% to 8,835 in 2020, from 10,534 in 2019 while the number of false alarm calls decreased by 14.1% to 6,094 in 2020, from 7,092 in 2019. The decrease in non-emergency calls and false alarm calls could be attributed to factors such as: (i) more people staying at home because of the COVID-19 situation; and (ii) SCDF’s efforts to raise public awareness not to call ‘995’ for non-emergencies.

**Emergency Calls**

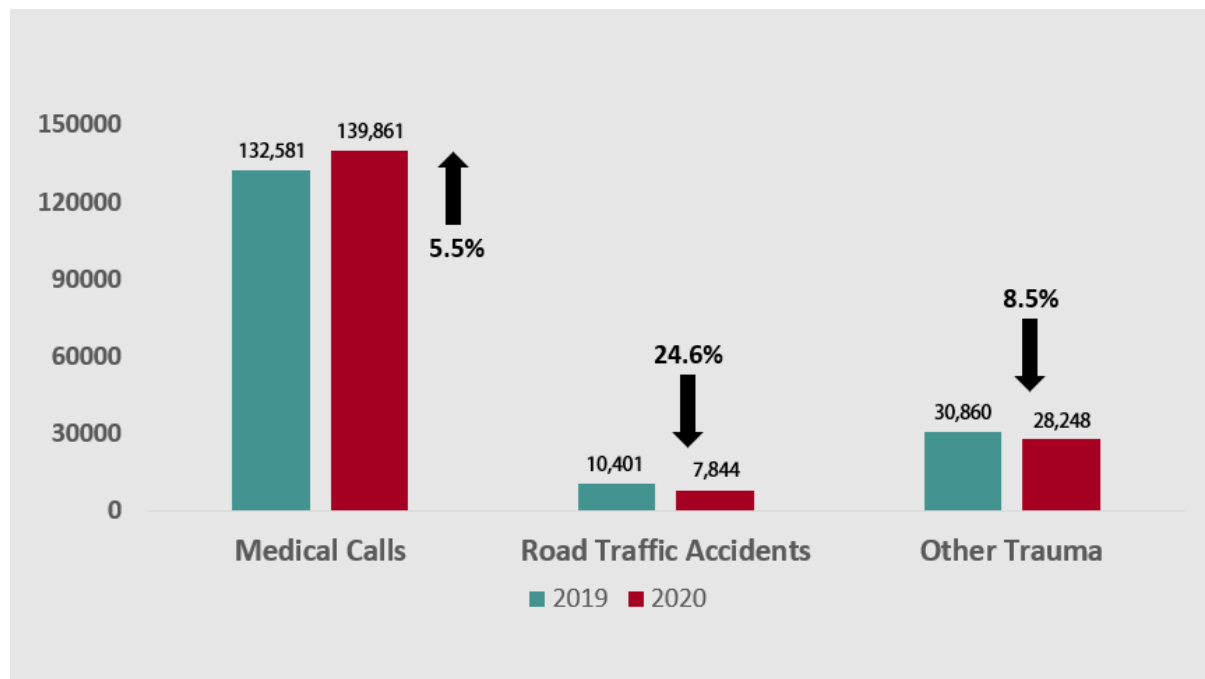
3. Of the 175,953 emergency calls received in 2020, 79.5% were medical-related

<sup>1</sup> Non-emergency calls are cases where urgent medical assistance by SCDF is not required, including cases where patients are either uninjured or have no medical complaints.

<sup>2</sup> False alarm calls include incidents where no patients were found at the incident scene.

(e.g. chest-pain, breathlessness, unconsciousness and cardiac arrest); 16% were trauma cases (e.g. industrial accidents, falls and assaults); and the remaining 4.5% 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 43.2%. The breakdown of emergency calls from 2019 to 2020 is reflected in Chart 1.

Chart 1: Breakdown of emergency calls from 2019 to 2020



4. Despite the decrease in the number of calls received for trauma cases and road traffic accidents, SCDF continued to respond to an increasing number of medical-related calls last year.

### Update on SCDF's EMS Tiered Response Framework

5. There were 499 cases that were assessed by SCDF to be non-emergencies and were not conveyed to hospitals in 2020. The individuals concerned were advised to seek treatment at a clinic or to call '1777' for a non-emergency ambulance. With the support from and cooperation of the public, SCDF was able to optimise and deploy its emergency resources to respond to serious emergencies.

6. In 2020, there were 58 cases where individuals who were classified as non-emergency cases<sup>3</sup> still insisted on being sent to the hospital. This was a significant decrease from the 151 such cases in 2019. SCDF will continue with its publicity efforts to educate the public on the rationale and importance of the non-conveyance policy for non-emergency cases.

### SCDF's Involvement in the COVID-19 Response

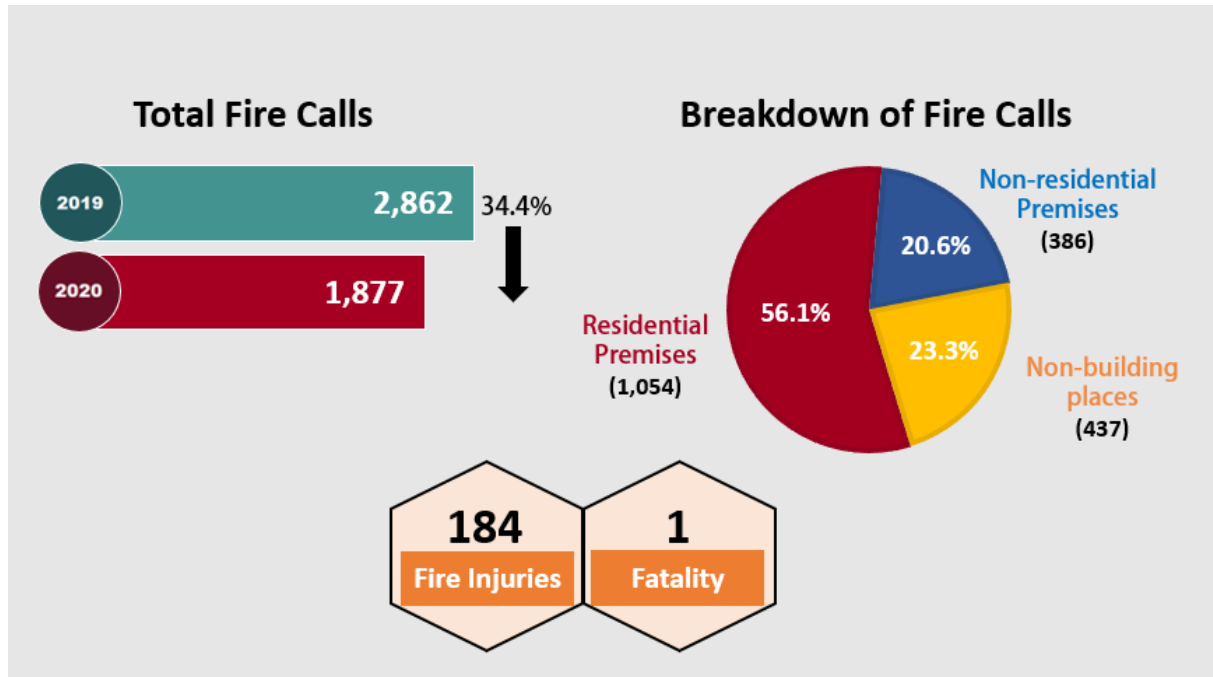
7. SCDF contributed to the national response to the COVID-19 pandemic through the conveyance of positive and suspected cases to hospitals. About 1,400 personnel comprising paramedics, emergency medical technicians and 995 operations centre

<sup>3</sup> Charges are imposed in cases where both SCDF and the hospital have assessed the case to be a non-emergency.

specialists were involved. In 2020, SCDF had conveyed about 2,000 COVID-19 positive cases and over 8,300 suspected cases. Of the suspected cases, over 60 were later diagnosed to be COVID-19 positive.

8. In addition to emergency medical response and conveyance, SCDF also provided support for the national response against COVID-19 in other areas (see Annex B for SCDF's other areas of involvement).

## Overview



9. SCDF responded to 1,877 fire calls in 2020 – a decrease of 34.4% from 2,862 in 2019. This was largely due to the significant decrease in vegetation fires in 2020 due to shorter periods of dry weather. In addition, there was a decrease in all three categories of fires (residential premises, non-residential premises and non-building places) in 2020.

10. There were 184 fire injuries in 2020, an increase from 142 in 2019. There was one fire fatality in 2020, which was related to the residential fire incident at Block 123 Ang Mo Kio Avenue 6 on 13 February 2020.

11. Fires caused by electrical origin<sup>4</sup> was the leading cause of all fires, accounting for 545 or 29% of all fires in 2020. Fires due to overheating of food<sup>5</sup> was the next highest cause with 416 cases (22.2%).

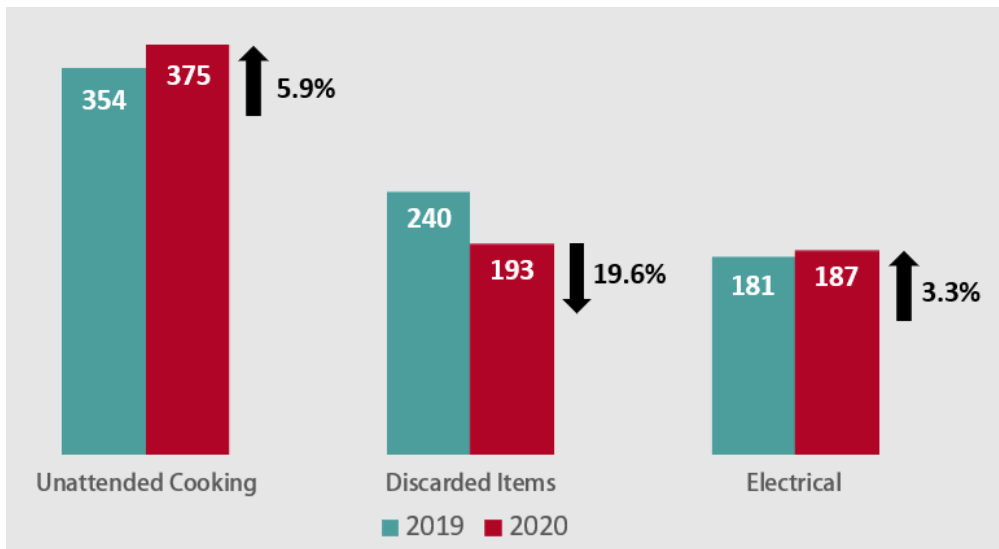
### Fires in Residential Premises

12. There were 1,054 fire incidents that occurred in residential premises (private and public) in 2020, a decrease of 9.8% or 114 cases from 2019. The top three types of fires in residential premises are reflected in [Chart 2](#).

<sup>4</sup> Fires involving faulty wirings and electrical appliances which ignite nearby combustible materials.

<sup>5</sup> Fires involving cooking activities.

Chart 2: Top three types of fires in residential premises



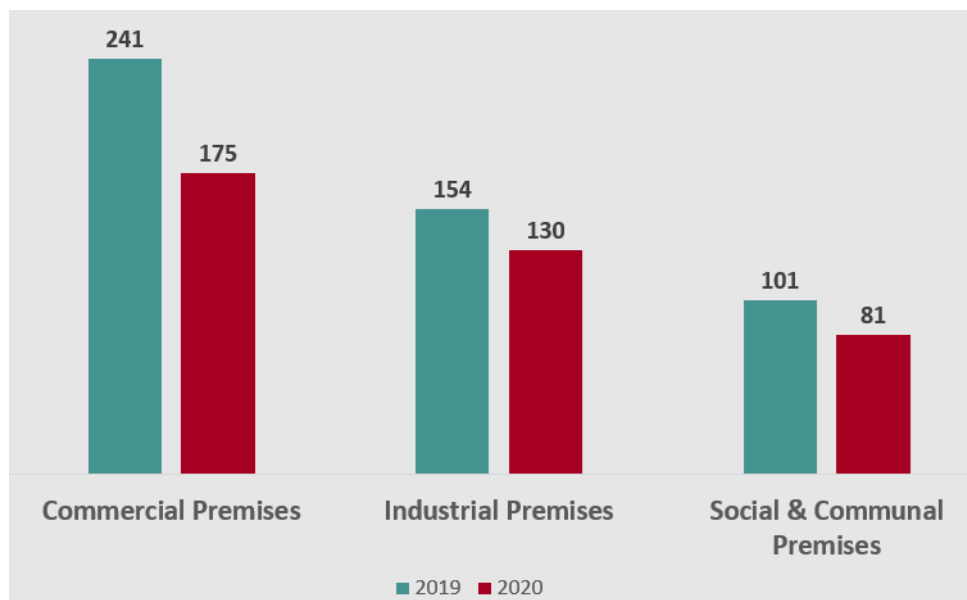
13. Unattended cooking fires, which formed the largest component of fires in residential premises, increased by 5.9% to 375 cases in 2020, from 354 in 2019. The number of electrical fires also rose by 3.3% to 187 cases in 2020, from 181 in 2019. The number of fire incidents involving discarded items has been on a downward trend since 2018, with a significant decrease of 19.6% in 2020.

14. SCDF will continue to publicise fire safety advisories and educate the public about preventive measures that can be taken at residential premises. For example, SCDF rolled out its latest fire safety advisory on preventing unattended cooking fires via the digital display panels at Housing Development Board blocks across the island in September 2020.

### **Fires in Non-Residential Premises**

15. In 2020, SCDF responded to 386 fire incidents in non-residential premises (commercial, industrial, social and communal), a decrease of 22.2% compared to 496 in 2019. The breakdown of fires in non-residential premises is in [Chart 3](#).

Chart 3: Breakdown of fires at non-residential premises



16. There was a decrease in the number of fire incidents across the three categories of non-residential premises. Fires in commercial premises decreased by 27.4% to 175 cases in 2020. Industrial premises saw a decrease in fire incidents by 15.6% to 130 cases in 2020. Fires in social and communal premises decreased by 19.8% to 81 cases in 2020.

17. SCDF will continue to collaborate with the National Fire and Civil Emergency Preparedness Council, building owners and Fire Safety Managers to ensure that premises remain fire-safe, while conducting enforcement checks at non-residential premises to ensure that fire safety is maintained.

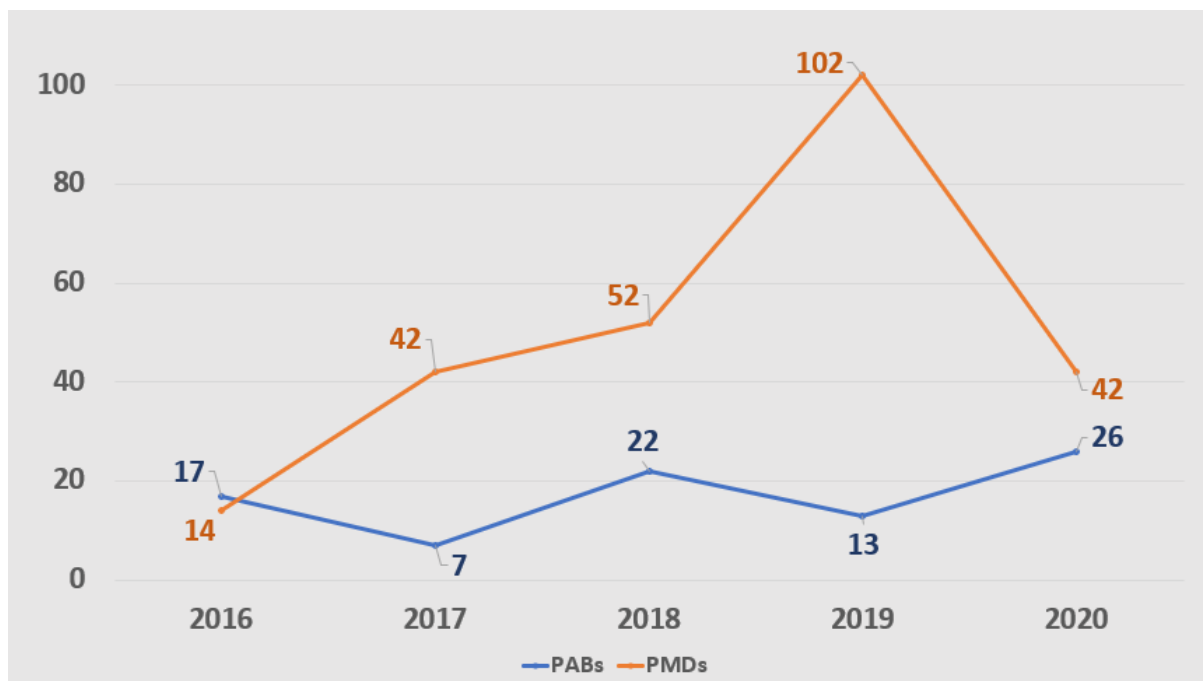
### **Fires in Non-Building Places**

18. There were 437 fire incidents in non-building premises (e.g. vegetation and vehicle fires) in 2020, a significant decrease of 63.5% or 761 cases from 1,198 in 2019. This was mainly due to the decrease in the number of vegetation fires which fell by 78% to 194 in 2020, from 883 in 2019. The number of vehicle fires also decreased by 21.5% to 153 in 2020, from 195 in 2019.

### **Area of Concern: Fires Involving Power Assisted Bicycles**

19. 2020 registered an overall decrease of 40.9% (from 115 in 2019 to 68 in 2020) in the number of cases of fires involving active mobility devices – this includes Personal Mobility Devices (PMDs) and Power Assisted Bicycles (PABs). While there was a significant 58.8% decrease in fires involving PMDs overall, within this category, fires involving PABs doubled from 13 cases in 2019 to 26 cases in 2020 (see [Chart 4](#) below).

Chart 4: Fires involving PABs and PMDs over the last 5 years (2016 – 2020)



20. In 2020, 46 fires or 67.6% of the fires involving PMDs and PABs occurred at residential premises. Members of the public who own PABs and PMDs should continue to be vigilant when handling their devices as these fires can result in casualties and serious damage to property.

21. SCDF will continue to raise public awareness of the fire safety risks associated with PMDs and PABs, and educate the public on actions they can take to reduce these risks.

#### Fire Safety Tips on PMDs and PABs:

- Do not leave batteries or devices to charge unattended for an extended period of time or overnight.
- Do not charge the PAB/PMD immediately after use.
- Do not charge a PAB/PMD or its batteries near combustible materials or along an escape path.
- Do not tamper with, modify, or attempt to repair a device on your own.
- Do purchase PMDs with UL2272 Certification Mark.
- Do purchase PABs with the EN15194 certification and affixed with LTA's orange seal of approval.
- Do charge PAB/PMD on a hard, flat surface to allow optimal dissipation of heat.
- Do use a power adaptor that carries the Safety Mark and is recommended by the manufacturer.
- Do regularly examine batteries for any damage or deformities such as bloating, corrosion or powdery residue.

#### Community First Responders for Minor Rubbish Fires

22. Rubbish chute/bin fires tend to be small scale, carry minimal risk of spreading and therefore pose a lower risk to human life. Such fires can easily be put out by



members of the public. In 2020, about 57% of rubbish fires had been put out by members of the public prior to SCDF's arrival at the scene.

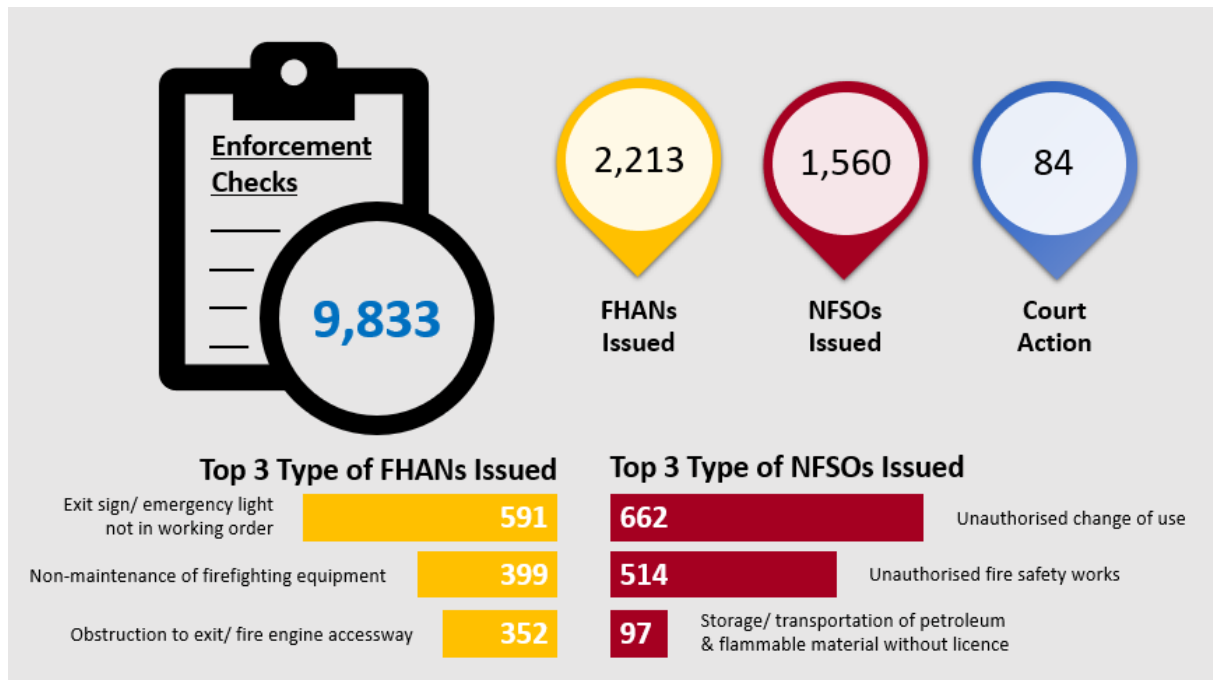
23. The Community First Responder (Fire) scheme was launched in 2018 as part of the SCDF myResponder app. This initiative alerts members of the public to minor rubbish chute and bin fires within their immediate vicinity. Currently, there are about 3,692 active responders who would be notified of such minor fires via the myResponder app. In 2020<sup>6</sup>, SCDF had sent out alerts for 1,368 rubbish chute and bin fires. 925 individuals responded to these incidents and helped to put out the fire.

24. Empowering Community First Responders to respond to these incidents will help SCDF optimise its emergency resources to attend to life-threatening and other higher-priority cases.

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<sup>6</sup> In early February 2020, the activation of Community First Responders (CFR) for medical emergency cases via the MyResponder app was suspended due to the high-risk of COVID-19 community transmission. Activation of CFRs for fire incidents was suspended in early April 2020. CFR activation resumed on 1 July 2020.

## Overview



25. In 2020, SCDF conducted 9,833 enforcement checks, as well as issued 2,213 FHANs<sup>7</sup> and 1,560 NFSOs<sup>8</sup>.

26. The most common fire hazard in 2020 was the non-functioning of exit sign and emergency lights, which accounted for 26.7% of the total FHANs issued. The most common fire safety violation was the unauthorised change of use of premises, which accounted for 42.4% of the total NFSOs issued in 2020.

27. There were 84 cases of fire safety violations that were prosecuted in Court in 2020. The majority of the offences were due to unauthorised change of use of premises (36 cases or 42.9%), followed by unauthorised fire safety works (25 cases or 29.8%). An example of fire safety violations and the penalties meted is as follows:

- a) In February 2020, a company was fined \$12,000 for various violations that compromised the building's fire safety. It had carried out unauthorised change of use of the factory to a workers' dormitory, and unauthorised fire safety works (erection of mezzanine floor and removal of part of fire compartment wall). The company has since rectified these violations.

28. SCDF continued to work with building owners to ensure fire safety, even as new safe management measures were being implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic. This included adhering to fire safety requirements, such as ensuring the quick and safe

<sup>7</sup> Under the Fire Safety Act, a FHAN is a notice issued to building owners or other responsible parties to abate the fire hazards.

<sup>8</sup> A NFSO is issued when the contravention poses serious fire safety risks and warrants a heavier penalty compared to the FHAN.

evacuation of occupants during a fire emergency.<sup>9</sup> SCDF takes a serious view of fire safety and has been conducting frequent enforcement checks, both proactively and in response to public feedback.

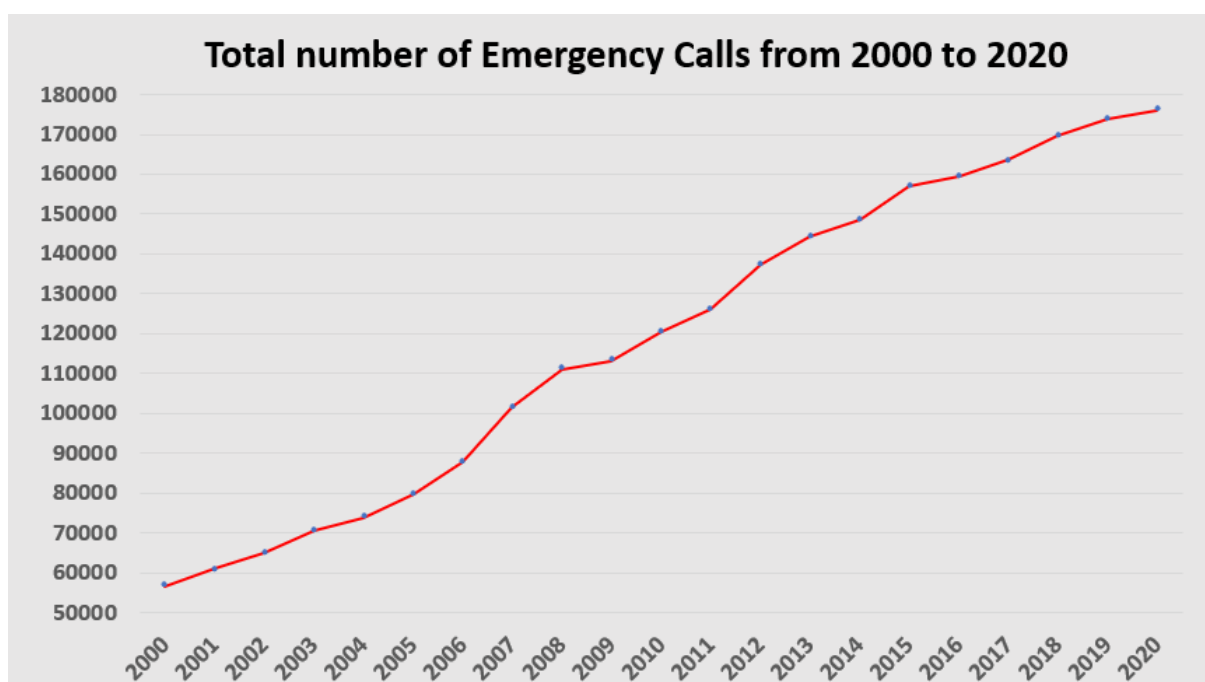
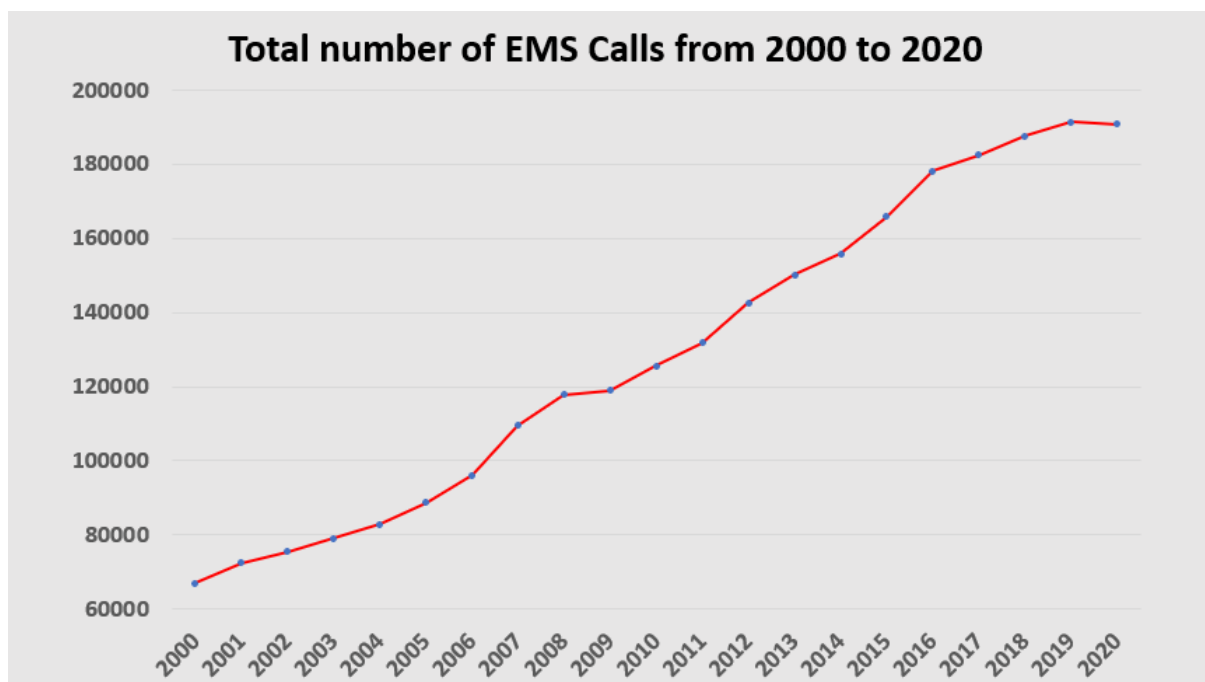
**Fire Safety Feedback**

29. Members of the public are encouraged to report any fire hazards that they come across. They can do so by submitting photographs and a brief description of the fire hazard using the 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.

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<sup>9</sup> Since early July 2020, inspections at higher risk premises were heightened (i.e. shopping malls where there is large congregation of transient population) to ensure that fire safety guidelines are complied with in these premises and that exit facilities remain accessible and unobstructed in the event of a fire emergency. Site inspections at temporary work dormitories were conducted during the COVID-19 period to ensure that the fire safety measures at these premises are in working order and the set of additional fire safety requirements are adhered to.



<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
↑7.6%	↑6.3%	↑8.6%	↑4.9%	↑8.1%	↑9.7%	↑15.7%	↑9.5%	↑1.9%	↑6.3%
<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>
↑4.6%	↑9.0%	↑5.1%	↑2.9%	↑5.7%	↑1.5%	↑2.6%	↑3.7%	↑2.5%	↑1.2%

## **SCDF'S INVOLVEMENT IN COVID-19 OPERATIONS**

### ***Government Quarantine Facility (GQF) Ops at HomeTeamNS (HTNS) Sembawang***

1. Between mid-January and 8 September 2020, SCDF managed the GQF at HTNS Sembawang together with key stakeholders. In total, 124 Persons-Under-Quarantine (PUQs) were handled at the GQF. A total of 137 personnel including SCDF full-time national servicemen (NSFs) supported this operation.

### ***Temperature screening ops at Changi Airport***

2. On 26 January 2020, the Government expanded the temperature screening operation at Changi Airport to include passengers from all incoming flights instead of only flights from China. An SCDF taskforce was formed on 28 January 2020 to support the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore in the temperature screening operations. The taskforce was deployed over 20 days from 28 January to 17 February and operated 24/7 on three shifts. The taskforce consisted of 125 SCDF NSFs supervised by four regular officers.

### ***Swabbing ops for passengers of flight from Wuhan***

3. In early February 2020, SCDF supported the Ministry of Health (MOH) in performing nasopharyngeal swabs on 170 passengers who were brought home via a flight from Wuhan. This was conducted by a team comprising SCDF NSF medical officers, and supported by regular officers. The initial swabbing was conducted on 11 and 12 February 2020 and a second swab test was carried out before their 14-day quarantine ended.

### ***Swabbing operations at GQFs***

4. Between 13 April and 30 June 2020, SCDF assisted with swabbing operations conducted by MOH and the Joint Task Force (JTF) on PUQs at GQFs, essential workers decanted from dormitories, as well as at-risk workers identified by JTF. 31 SCDF personnel comprising Medical Officers, Paramedics and Fire Rescue Specialists volunteered to participate in the operations and over 3,400 swabs were conducted.

### ***Decanting ops for COVID-19 positive migrant workers to Community Care Facilities (CCF)***

5. Between 22 April and 30 June 2020, SCDF officers and vehicles were deployed to assist MOH in conveying COVID-19 infected persons with mild symptoms from GQFs and hospitals to CCFs. Over 2,800 persons were decanted in this operation.

### ***Fire safety site assessments for conversion of existing buildings to migrant worker dormitories***

6. The Government identified several premises to house migrant workers temporarily. These were not purpose-built dormitories with accompanying fire safety provisions. To ensure fire safety, SCDF developed fire safety guidelines and provided

consultancy advice to the operators of the premises, in support of the inter-agency effort to house migrant workers. SCDF also deployed officers to conduct site inspections to advise the operators of the premises on fire safety and emergency preparedness requirements. 88 sites have been inspected thus far.

### ***Conversion of the Civil Defence Academy (CDA) into a temporary migrant worker dormitory***

7. The dormitory block at the CDA operated as a temporary dormitory from 9 April to 26 May 2020 for about 290 migrant workers. The facility was managed by a team of SCDF officers 24/7, who also looked into the health, hygiene and welfare requirements of the residents.

### ***Deployment of SCDF officers to the Forward Assurance & Support Team (FAST)***

8. SCDF deployed five officers to the FAST teams in 2020.

## **PREPARATIONS FOR COVID-19 OPERATIONS**

### ***Personal protective equipment (PPE) donning and safety training***

9. In support of whole-of-government efforts led by MOH and the Ministry of National Development, SCDF conducted mask fitting and PPE/safety training for Grab and SMRT drivers who had volunteered to ferry suspected COVID-19 passengers arriving at Changi Airport, drivers who were operating converted SMRT transporters for migrant workers who were potential COVID-19 cases, and staff of over 40 premises which had been converted to migrant worker decanting sites. More than 3,000 personnel had been trained.

### ***CERT training for Temporary Migrant Worker Dormitories***

10. In support of the whole-of-government effort to rehouse migrant workers, SCDF officers provided customised training for in-situ personnel such as dormitory operators and security staff at the Temporary Migrant Worker Dormitories to meet Company Emergency Response Teams requirements for the converted facilities. This includes conducting evacuation and mitigating incipient fires in an emergency. A total of 71 training sessions were conducted.

11. A total of about **1,100** SCDF officers were involved in these additional operations and training.