

## TOPIC C

### FIRE SAFETY ENFORCEMENT STATISTICS (JAN – DEC 2012)

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#### DECLINE IN NUMBER OF FIRE HAZARD ABATEMENT NOTICE (FHAN) ISSUED

SCDF conducts enforcement checks on a regular basis to ensure that fire hazards are detected and rectified. Enforcement actions are also taken when feedback is received from the public, for example, through e-mails, letters and hotline calls. Such public feedback shows the fire safety consciousness of our community, and more importantly, helps to keep offenders on their toes, enhancing the safety of our environment. The types of enforcement actions taken against fire safety offenders are shown in Annex C.

2. As shown in Table C1 below, SCDF conducted 13,192 enforcement checks in 2012, an increase of 1,209 (10.1%) from the 11,983 checks conducted in 2011. Of the 13,192 enforcement checks in 2012, SCDF issued 2,341 Fire Hazard Abatement Notices (FHAN)<sup>1</sup>. This is a decrease of 11.1% from the 2,632 FHANs issued in 2011.

Description	Jan - Dec 2011	Jan- Dec 2012	Absolute Change	% Change
Enforcement checks	11,983	13,192	1,209	10.1%
FHANs issued	2,632	2,341	-291	-11.1%
NFSOs issued	2,164	2,634	470	21.7%
Court prosecution cases	49	74	25	51.0%

**Table C1: Number of Enforcement Checks, FHANs and NFSOs issued**

3. While it is encouraging that the number of FHANs issued has dropped, signifying greater level of compliance to fire safety requirements, the 2,341 hazards detected by SCDF still warrants attention. Every fire hazard has the potential to result in fire, causing injuries and damages to properties. Every effort must be taken by members of the public to reduce fire hazards so as to lower the fire risks in our environment.

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<sup>1</sup> The FHAN is a warning given to building owners and management to remove the fire hazard.

**OBSTRUCTION TO EXITS AND FIRE ENGINE ACCESSWAYS IS TOP MOST COMMON CONTRIBUTING FACTORS FOR FHANS**

4. The most common fire hazard resulting in the issuance of FHANS last year related to the obstruction of exit doors and fire engine access ways. A total of 648 FHANS were served last year for this violation, a slight decrease from the 657 FHANS issued in 2011. During emergencies, such obstructions can impede the smooth evacuation of occupants from the affected premises and also hampers SCDF responders from mitigating the incident effectively. The top three types of fire hazards that contributed to the FHANS issued last year is shown in **Table C2**.

Type of Fire Hazard	Jan - Dec 2011	Jan- Dec 2012	Absolute Change	% Change
Obstruction (exits/fire engine access ways)	657	648	-9	-1.4%
Exit signs not illuminated	532	428	-104	-19.5%
Unauthorised storage of combustible / flammable materials	128	370	242	189%

**Table C2: Breakdown of FHANS (top 3 types of fire hazard)**

5. There was a significant increase in the number of FHANS issued for the unauthorised storage of combustible/flammable materials from 128 in 2011 to 370 in 2012. Building owners and members of the public should practice good housekeeping and store combustibles/flammables in proper places. The indiscriminate storage of combustibles and flammables within premises can increase the fire load.

**UNAUTHORISED CHANGE OF USE REMAINS MAIN CONTRIBUTING FACTOR FOR NOTICE OF FIRE SAFETY OFFENCE (NFSO)**

6. A Notice of Fire Safety Offence (NFSO) is issued when there is direct contravention of the Fire Safety Act, for example, when unauthorised fire safety works are carried out. It carries with it a composition fine of between \$300 and \$500. As shown in **Table C1** above, a total of 2,634 NFSOs were issued in 2012, an increase of 470 (21.7%) from the 2,164 NFSOs issued in 2011.

7. The main contributing offence for the increase in NFSOs was the unauthorised change of use, which accounted for 59.6% of the total NFSOs issued in 2012. **Table C3** shows the breakdown of NFSOs issued for the top three offences.

Type of Offence	Jan - Dec 2011	Jan- Dec 2012	Absolute Change	% Change
Unauthorised change of use	1,183	1,571	388	32.8%
Unauthorised fire safety works	500	526	26	5.2%
Storage &/or transportation of Petroleum &/or Flammable Materials without licence	170	220	50	29.4%

**Table C3: Breakdown of NFSOs (top 3 types of offence)**

8. Of the 1,571 NFSOs issued for unauthorised change of use, a large proportion (44.7%) was due to the unauthorized conversion of residential premises to workers' dormitories and hostels. For unauthorised change of use, the premises owner will be issued with a fine and SCDF will re-inspect the premises to ensure compliance to the fire safety requirements. Follow up enforcement action will be taken against owners who fail to comply.

9. There are regular joint operations with MOM and other agencies such as, URA, NEA, to inspect such premises and where violations are found, each agency will take separate actions using the available powers within their respective legislations. Other than the joint checks, SCDF conducts its own fire safety inspections regularly and also in response to public feedback.

10. The number of NFSOs issued for the storage and/or transportation of petroleum and/or flammable materials without licence also increased by 29.4% from 170 cases in 2011 to 220 cases in 2012.

### **SCDF TAKES FIRM ACTION ON FIRE SAFETY VIOLATIONS**

11. SCDF takes violations of fire safety requirements seriously and will not hesitate to take firm actions against building management who do not promptly rectify the fire safety violations despite warnings and fines. Court action will be taken against serious cases or repeated offenders. For general fire safety violations, the maximum penalty can be up to \$10,000 and/or jail term not exceeding 6 months. For carrying out unauthorised fire safety works, the building management can be fined up to \$50,000 and/or jailed for a term not exceeding 12 months. In extreme cases, SCDF is empowered to effect temporary closure of premises. The heavier penalties proposed in the amendment to the Fire Safety Act will also serve to strengthen SCDF's enforcement actions. This will be tabled for Second Reading in Parliament in Apr 2013.

12. Between Jan to Dec 2012, 74 charges were filed for court actions against fire safety offenders, an increase of 25 cases (51%) from the 49 charges for 2011. Of the 74 court actions in 2012, 52 cases (70.3%) were for the unauthorised change of use.

Type of Offence	Jan -Dec 2011	Jan- Dec 2012	Absolute Change
Unauthorised change of use	26	52	26
Unauthorised fire safety works	3	10	7
Failure to comply with Fire Hazard Abatement Notice	10	5	-5

**Table C4 : Court Prosecution Cases (top 3 offences)**

13. A company was fined a total of \$12,000 for two counts of unauthorised change of use of premise and two counts of carrying out fire safety works without approval. The building's driveway was converted to a storage area and part of the office on the fourth storey was converted to dormitories. The unauthorised fire safety work involved erection of tentages at the building's driveway and erection of partition.

#### **FESTIVE SEASON – FIRE SAFETY ALERT**

14. With the Chinese New Year around the corner, SCDF would like to remind the public to exercise caution to minimise fire hazards and prevent outbreaks of fire during the festive season.

15. As the number of patrons and customers are usually higher during the festive season, we would also like to remind owners and management of public buildings and places of recreation/entertainment including hotels and shopping centres to ensure compliance to all fire safety requirements. Escape passageways should be free from obstruction and fire exit doors should be kept accessible for use during emergencies. Overcrowding in building premises especially public entertainment outlets, such as discotheques and pubs, should be avoided as it would impede the safe evacuation of people from the premises in the event of fire. SCDF will be stepping up inspections at commercial buildings to check on fire safety violations.

16. Anyone who notices fire hazards should report them to SCDF at 1800-280-0000. Fire safety is a collective community responsibility and together we can help to reduce fire occurrences in Singapore.

**ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS TAKEN AGAINST FIRE SAFETY OFFENDERS**

Enforcement Action	Description
Fire Hazard Abatement Notice (FHAN)	Under the Fire Safety Act, the FHAN is a warning given to building owners and management to remove the fire hazard. Most common fire hazards spotted resulting in FHANs are poor maintenance of hose reels and fire extinguishers, and obstructed exits.
Notice of Composition (NOC)	Offenders who failed to rectify the violations after being issued with FHANs will then be served with a fine termed NOC up to \$500.
Notice of Fire Safety Offence (NFSO)	When the offence is of a more serious nature e.g. carrying out unauthorised fire safety works, a NFSO is issued. The NFSO carries with it a composition fine up to \$500.
Court Action	Court action will be taken for serious cases. For general fire safety violations, the maximum penalty can be up to \$10,000 and/or jail term not exceeding 6 months. And for carrying out unauthorised fire safety works, the building management can be fined up to \$50,000 and/or jailed for a term not exceeding 12 months. In extreme cases, SCDF is empowered to effect temporary closure of premises.