

Government's efforts to enhance fire safety of old buildings

The Audit Commission ("Audit") conducted a review of the implementation of the fire safety improvement programmes under the Fire Safety (Commercial Premises) Ordinance (Cap. 502) since 1997 and the Fire Safety (Buildings) Ordinance (Cap. 572) since 2007.

2. The Committee noted the following findings from the Director of Audit's Report:

- the Buildings Department ("BD") and the Fire Services Department ("FSD") had inspected 72% to 88% of the target buildings/premises. However, six years after the Fire Safety (Buildings) Ordinance came into operation, only 16% and 27% of the directions issued by the BD and the FSD respectively for improving the fire safety provisions of Target Composite Buildings (partly commercial and partly domestic buildings) had been complied with;
- the time target of issuing directions within four months after inspections was not met for over half of the directions issued. Directions to be issued for 534 target buildings/premises were overdue for three or more years;
- 31 450 (47%) of the total 66 374 directions issued by the BD had remained outstanding for an average period of 34 months. Case studies revealed instances of inadequate check on work progress and delay in conducting compliance inspection of completed works; and
- case studies also revealed cases of unauthorized buildings works with fire hazards found during inspections of target buildings/premises by the BD, but had not been promptly followed up, thus prolonging fire risks.

3. The Committee did not hold any public hearing on this subject. Instead, it asked for written responses regarding implementation of fire safety improvement programmes; arrangements for inspections and issuing fire safety directions; administration of fire safety directions issued; and follow-up actions on unauthorized building works found during inspections. The replies from the **Director of Fire Services** and the **Acting Director of Buildings** are in *Appendices 33 and 34* respectively.

4. The Committee wishes to be kept informed of the progress made in implementing the various recommendations made by Audit.