

Fire safety

Figure 1 – Number of actual fire accidents

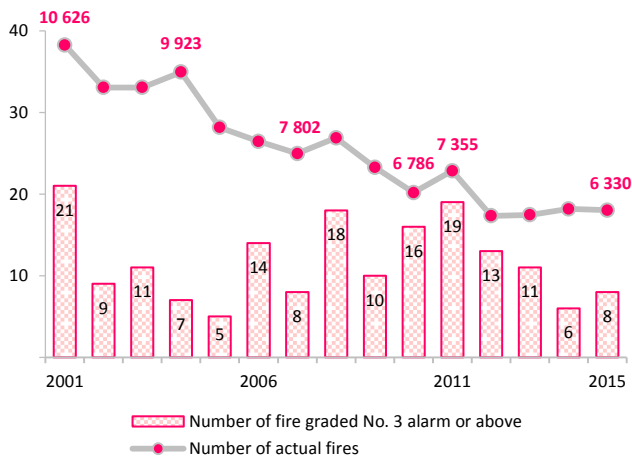


Figure 2 – Injuries in fire accidents

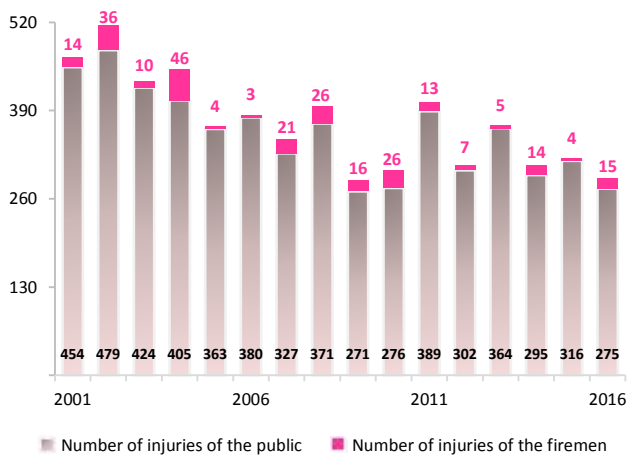
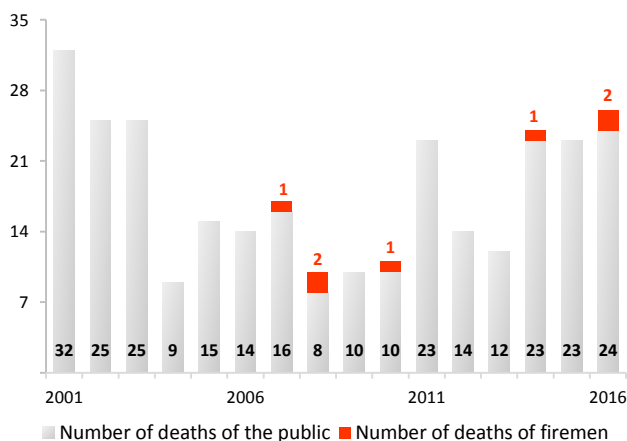


Figure 3 – Fatalities in fire accidents



Highlights

- With an enhanced public awareness on fire safety, the annual number of fire accidents decreased by 40% to 6 330 during 2001-2015. For serious fire accidents (No. 3 alarm or above), it decreased by a larger magnitude of 62% in 15 years to eight cases in 2015 (**Figure 1**). Overcooking, careless handling or disposal of lighted materials (e.g. cigarette ends, matches and joss sticks) and electrical faults were the major causes of fire accidents, taking up 50% of the total.
- In line with the downtrend of accident cases, the number of injuries caused by fire accidents declined by 38% during 2001-2016. While there were only five years in the past 16 years which recorded a single-digit number of injuries of firemen, 36 and 46 firemen were injured in 2002 and 2004 respectively while on duty (**Figure 2**). In 2002, a serious fire accident arising from a gas leakage triggered an explosion in a residential flat. This single incident claimed three lives and caused 21 injuries, including 13 firemen. Another serious accident occurred in a warehouse in 2004. Thirty-three firemen got chemical burns caused by toxic gases and corrosive liquids.
- Regarding fatalities in fire accidents during 2001-2016, the year 2004 saw the lowest total number of deaths. However, the annual number of deaths in fire accidents rose to over 20 in the last three years (**Figure 3**).

Fire safety (cont'd)

Figure 4 – Calls not related to actual fires

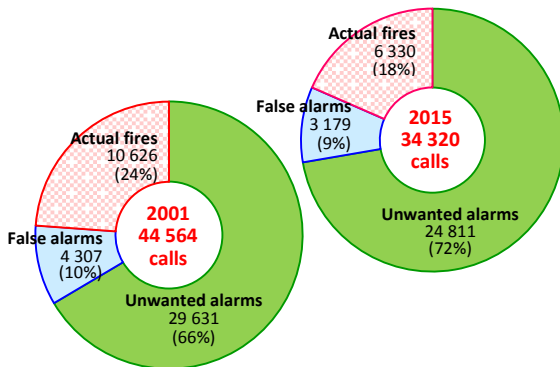


Figure 5 – Fire safety of old commercial buildings

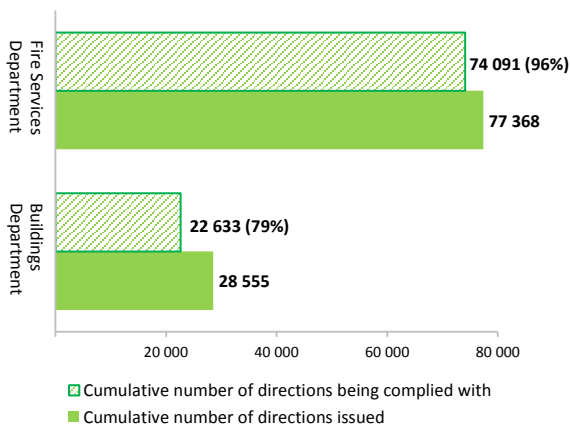
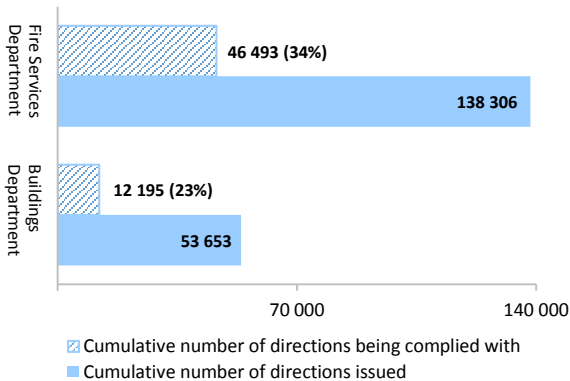


Figure 6 – Fire safety of old composite buildings



Highlights

- Fire Services Department ("FSD") received many fire calls each year, but it turned out that the majority of them were false or unwanted alarms triggered by faulty detection systems. In 2015, 34 320 fire calls were received. Matching with 6 330 actual fire accidents in 2015, this translated into genuine call ratio of 18%, down from the respective ratio of 24% in 2001 (Figure 4).
- After the tragic fire accident in the aged high-rise commercial building Garley in 1996, the Government enhanced safety regulations of some 1 800 pre-1987 commercial buildings in 1998, requiring mandatory installation of fire detection and sprinkler systems. FSD and the Buildings Department ("BD") would issue fire safety improvement directions under their jurisdictions to building owners who have not met the safety requirements. Since the introduction of the new regulations in 1998, FSD had issued over 77 000 directions, while BD issued over 28 000. In 2016, the cumulative compliance rate of directions issued by FSD was 96%, and that for BD was 79% (Figure 5).
- In 2007, the Government introduced new fire safety standards for some 13 000 pre-1987 commercial-residential composite buildings. Since then until 2016, FSD and BD had issued over 138 000 and 53 000 improvement directions, yet the cumulative compliance rate were 34% and 23% respectively (Figure 6). The low compliance rate was partly attributable to a lack of collective bodies representing the owners or residents in these aged buildings. In response, the Government will continue to provide necessary assistance to eligible owners to form owners' corporations and apply for financial assistance from the Urban Renewal Authority if needed.

Data sources: Latest figures from Buildings Department and Fire Services Department.

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