

Bills Committee on Fire Services (Amendment) Bill 2015

Government's Response to the Written Submissions from Professional Bodies

Purpose

This paper sets out the Government's response to the written submissions from the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) and the Buildings Department Local Building Surveyors' Association (BDLBSA) which were submitted to the Bills Committee on 6 June and 8 June 2016 respectively.

The Government's Response

2. We thank the two bodies for their comments on the qualifications and experience requirements of Registered Fire Engineers (RFE) and the composition of the Registration Committee and Interview Board Panel. If the Fire Services (Amendment) Bill 2015 is passed, details of the RFE Scheme, including the qualifications and experience requirements of RFEs, will be provided in the new subsidiary legislation to be made under the Fire Services Ordinance (Cap. 95) as appropriate, and be put before the Legislative Council (LegCo) for examination. Before the new subsidiary legislation is introduced into the LegCo, we will fully consult the relevant professional bodies on the details of the Scheme. The Government will introduce Committee Stage Amendments to subject the new subsidiary legislation (except for matters relating to the fees for registration and de-registration of RFEs) to the positive vetting procedure under section 35 of the Interpretation and General Clauses Ordinance (Cap. 1), which would provide sufficient time for LegCo to scrutinise the details of the Scheme.

3. Under the existing legislation, officers of the Fire Services Department (FSD) have sole responsibility for the fire safety risk assessment of prescribed premises and the inspection and certification of fire safety requirements. As soon as they join the Department, FSD officers are required to acquire knowledge in fire engineering from various training programmes and practical work (including fire-fighting and rescue, fire prevention and enforcement). For example, fire science and the standard and design of fire service installations are among the compulsory courses of FSD personnel's induction training. Only when the relevant personnel have been equipped with adequate fire engineering knowledge and practical experience would they be deployed to take up the duties of conducting fire safety risk assessment for prescribed premises and inspecting and certifying the compliance of fire safety

requirements. In addition, professional engineers are seconded from the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department to FSD to coordinate the standard and design of fire service installations and ventilating systems and develop the standard for certification. The proposed RFE Scheme enables private practitioners to take up the statutory duties currently discharged by FSD officers. Therefore, the qualifications and experience requirements of RFEs must be rigorous to ensure fire safety and public safety. The Government will continue to consult the trade on this and other details of the scheme.

4. As for the name of the RFE Scheme, the persons to be registered will be empowered to conduct fire safety risk assessment, formulate fire safety requirements, and/or provide inspection and certification services for fire service installations and equipment and/or ventilating systems in prescribed premises. Those who perform such work will have to possess sufficient professional knowledge and practical experience in such areas under the scope of “fire engineering” as fire protection systems, fire safety management, fire science, and human behaviours during fire, etc. to be able to discharge the said duties effectively. We therefore consider “Registered Fire Engineer” an appropriate name for these qualified persons.

Presentation

5. Members are invited to note the above.

Security Bureau
Fire Services Department
June 2016