



NEWS RELEASE

SINGAPORE CIVIL DEFENCE FORCE

PUBLIC AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT * 91 UBI AVE 4 * S(408827) * TEL : 68481501 * FAX : 62894401

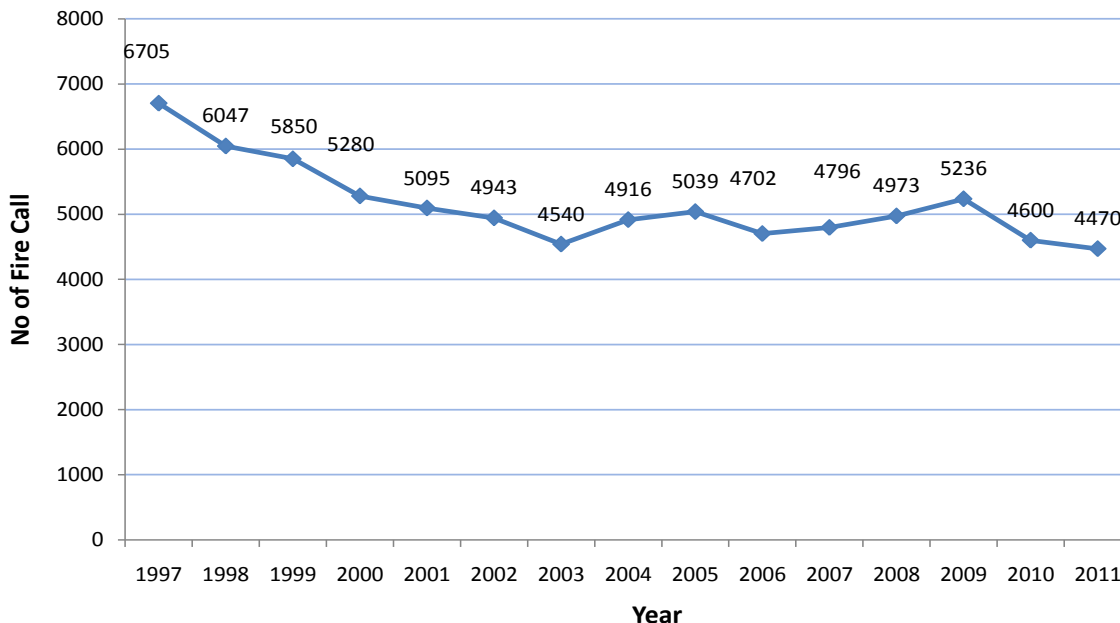
FIRE, AMBULANCE AND ENFORCEMENT STATISTICS

TOPIC A

FIRE INCIDENT STATISTICS (JAN – DEC 2011)

FIRE INCIDENTS AT ALL TIME LOW

Between Jan to Dec 2011, SCDF responded to a total of 4,470 fires, a decrease of 3% from the 4,600 fires in 2010. This is the lowest number of fire incidents recorded in more than a decade. The total number of fires in the last 15 years (1997 to year 2011) is as shown in **Graph A1 below**:



Graph A1: Total number of fires (1997 -2011)

2. The overall downward slide in the number of fires over the years can be attributed to greater public awareness on fire safety and the concerted public education efforts by SCDF and its community partners. This includes the National

Fire and Civil Emergency Preparedness Council (NFEC), Community Emergency and Engagement Committees (C2E), grassroots leaders, and the community at large.

3. Nationwide programmes such as Community Emergency Preparedness Programmes (CEPP), Emergency Preparedness (EP) Days, outreach programmes in schools, commercial and industrial sectors have been useful in forging a more fire safety conscious community.

DROP IN NUMBER OF FIRES ACROSS ALL TYPES OF PREMISES

4. The breakdown of fire calls by type of premises as shown in **Table A1** below. Of the 4,470 fires, 3,254 involved residential premises, while 565 involved commercial, industrial, social and communal premises. Non-building (e.g. vegetation and vehicle) fires contributed to 651 cases. The marked decrease in non-building fires was attributed largely to the significant fall in vegetation fires.

| Description | Jan-Dec 2010 | Jan-Dec 2011 | Absolute Change | % Change |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| Fires in Residential Premises | 3267 | 3254 | -13 | -0.4% |
| Fires in Non Residential Premises (Commercial, Industrial, Social & Communal) | 590 | 565 | -25 | -4.2% |
| Non-Building Fires | 743 | 651 | -92 | -12.4% |
| Total Number of Fires | 4600 | 4470 | -130 | -2.8% |

Table A1: Breakdown of fires by type of premises

ENCOURAGING DROP IN RUBBISH FIRES, DISCARDED ITEMS FIRES

5. Of the 3,254 fires in residential premises, rubbish fires formed the main bulk at 40% (1,309 cases). These rubbish fires normally comprise fires involving rubbish chutes and rubbish bins mainly located at lift lobbies. Fires involving discarded items at common spaces in public housing estates such as corridors, passageways, lift lobbies, staircases and void decks, form the second biggest component of residential fires, accounting for 22% (708 cases) of the total number of residential fires.

6. Although the number of rubbish fires continues to be high, it is encouraging to note that there is a drop from 1,354 cases in 2010 to 1,309 cases in 2011. See **Table A2**. The drop in the number of fires involving discarded items, from 801 cases to 708 cases, is also encouraging.

| Types of Residential Fire | Jan-Dec 2010 | Jan-Dec 2011 | Absolute Change | % Change |
|--|--------------|--------------|-----------------|----------|
| Rubbish Fires (Rubbish chutes & rubbish bins) | 1354 | 1309 | -45 | -3.3% |
| Discarded Items Fires | 801 | 708 | -93 | -11.6% |

Table A2: Rubbish fires and discarded items fires in Residential Premises

7. Residents should continue to play their part to prevent rubbish fires. They should completely extinguish lighted cigarettes and douse charcoal embers with water before disposal, and avoid throwing flammable substances like paint, oil or kerosene into rubbish chutes/bins.

8. Likewise, residents are advised not to discard items outside their homes or at the common areas such as corridors and lift lobbies as these can fuel fires when lighted materials are indiscriminately thrown onto them. They should make arrangements with the Town Councils for removal of bulky items such as cupboards, sofas, etc. Residents should adopt the guidelines on the use of common areas in HDB estates. (see Annex A on the Fire Safety Guidelines on the Use of Common Areas in HDB estates). Anyone who observes items being discarded at common areas should also report them to the Town Council.

INCREASE IN FIRES INVOLVING UNATTENDED COOKING AND HOUSEHOLD CONTENTS AND GAS FIRES

9. One area of concern is the number of unattended cooking fires. This forms the third biggest component of residential fires, accounting for 15% of the total number of residential fires. As shown in Table A3, the number of fires for this category increased from 474 to 500.

| Description | Jan-Dec 2010 | Jan-Dec 2011 | Absolute Change | % Change |
|------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------|----------|
| Unattended Cooking Fires | 474 | 500 | 26 | 5.5% |
| Fires involving Household Contents | 259 | 338 | 79 | 31% |
| Gas Fires | 20 | 43 | 23 | 115% |

Table A3: Unattended cooking fires, household content fires and gas fires in Residential Premises

10. Leaving cooking unattended even for a short while could result in fire outbreaks that cause significant damages to their house and may even compromise the safety of the occupants. Residents should conscientiously adopt the following habits:

- a. Avoid leaving their cooking unattended; and

- b. Turn off cooking appliances when not in use or whenever they need to attend to other personal matters, even for a short while.

11. Residents are also advised to exercise more caution when using gas from LPG cylinders. The number of gas fires also went up from 20 cases in 2010 to 43 cases in 2011. Such fires result from the accumulation of LPG gases which may have leaked from a faulty LPG cylinder, regulator, hose or stove.

12. In Feb 2011, SCDF sent out a circular to all LPG suppliers to inform them of the 5-point LPG Safety Check Programme. Under this programme, suppliers are required to ensure that their dealers carry out 5-point safety check on LPG systems installed in households at least once a year. The 5-point safety check includes the hose, regulator, hose clips, cylinder and joints/connection. To certify the conduct of the 5-point check, the dealer is required to mark its company's stamp onto the LPG safety tag attached to the LPG cylinder. The SCDF has also been educating the public about the 5-point check through exhibitions conducted at the residential heartlands during the Emergency Preparedness Days.

13. Another area of concern is the number of fires involving household contents. As shown in **Table A3**, there were 338 fires involving contents of households (e.g. furniture, clothing, mattresses and praying altars) in 2011, an increase of 79 from the 259 cases for the same period last year. Fires involving furniture, clothing, mattresses, etc are usually caused by the indiscriminate disposal of lighted materials such as cigarette butts or children playing with lighted materials.

14. On 29 June 2011, a fire broke out at a unit at Blk 54 Lorong 5 Toa Payoh. The fire involved household contents and was caused by a boy who was playing with lighted materials. As a result of the fire, four persons suffered minor injuries and were conveyed to hospital. Three of the casualties were residents of the affected unit while the last casualty was from another unit. One of the bedrooms and items placed along the corridor were completely burnt, while the rest of the flat and corridor sustained heat and smoke damage.

15. Fires involving household contents can be avoided if proper fire safety practices are observed. Here are some preventive measures:

- a. Keep lighted materials out of children's reach;
- b. Store flammable substances in a safe place;
- c. Do not smoke in bed and extinguish cigarette butts/matches completely;
- d. Don't have window curtains near altars or stoves; and
- e. Don't keep papers near altars or stoves.

16. It is useful for households to keep a fire extinguisher at home to tackle incipient fires. With proper training in the use of a fire extinguisher, they will be able to put out an incipient fire or prevent it from developing and spreading further even before the responders arrive. This will certainly minimise the damage to property and risk to lives.

POST FIRE PUBLIC EDUCATION BLITZ IN PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES AND CD READY HOMES PROGRAMME

17. SCDF in collaboration with its community partners, has introduced various outreach programmes as part of its post fire public education blitz. Since Jan 2012,

the post fire public education blitz efforts have been further enhanced to include the setting up of mobile fire safety exhibitions at the void decks of the affected blocks. The exhibition will showcase pictures of the actual fire scenes of the premises (with no mention of the particular unit) to ensure a more impactful delivery of the fire safety message.

18. In the event of a fire, SCDF will alert the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) from the affected area. The CERT members will then work with the respective Civil Defence Division and Town Council to set up and man the exhibition booth. The CERT members will also conduct house-to-house visits to distribute fire safety pamphlets and educate the residents on fire safe practices. The CERT members' familiarity with the residents makes it easier for them to convey the fire safety messages to their neighbours living in their constituencies and vicinity.

19. Fire safety is a collective community responsibility and everyone should play their part to reduce fire occurrences in Singapore. Residents are encouraged to take ownership of their home's safety by participating in the CD Ready Homes Programme. The programme educates the public about the importance of emergency preparedness at home and helps them assess their own preparedness through a self-validation checklist. The checklist, available in four official languages, can be collected at Civil Defence Divisions and Community Clubs. It can also be downloaded from scdf.gov.sg. Since its launch in April 2011, 16,000 households have participated in CD Ready Homes Programme.

LESS FIRES AT COMMERCIAL AND SOCIAL/COMMUNAL PREMISES

20. The number of fires at commercial premises (including offices, hotels, shopping complexes, places of public recreation/entertainment) fell by 5% from 309 in 2010 to 294 in 2011, as shown in **Table A4**. The decrease can be attributed to the untiring efforts of the NFEC, building owners and fire safety managers in ensuring a high level of fire safety standard to keep their buildings safe from the threats of fires.

| Description | Jan-Dec 2010 | Jan-Dec 2011 | Absolute Change | % Change |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|
| Fires at Commercial Premises | 309 | 294 | -15 | -4.9% |
| Fires at Industrial Premises | 160 | 176 | 16 | 10.0% |
| Fires at Social/Communal Premises | 121 | 95 | -26 | -21.5% |

Table A4: Breakdown of fires at Non-Residential Premises

21. The number of fires at industrial premises in 2011 increased marginally by 16 cases. See **Table A4**. These fires were found mainly in warehouses or factories and largely involved rubbish and discarded items, contents and electrical items.

22. The reduction in the number of fires involving social/communal premises can be attributed to a decrease in the number of fires involving rubbish collecting centres.

FIRE INJURIES/FATALITIES

23. The number of injuries arising from fires increased by 22 persons to 165 persons, as shown in **Table A5**.

24. There were four fatalities due to fire incidents from Jan to Dec 2011. The first fatality was due to a residential unit fire which occurred at Marine Terrace in March 2011. Two fatalities resulted from the industrial fire at Benoi Road in May 2011. The fourth fatality was due to a residential unit fire at Stirling Road in May 2011.

| Description | Jan-Dec 2010 | Jan-Dec 2011 | Absolute Change | % Change |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|
| Number of fire injuries | 143 | 165 | 22 | 15.4% |
| Fatalities | 0 | 4 | 4 | - |

Table A5: Number of fire casualties

TOPIC B

EMERGENCY AMBULANCE SERVICE STATISTICS

(JAN – DEC 2011)

EMERGENCY AMBULANCE SERVICE (EAS) CALLS REMAIN HIGH

SCDF's Emergency Ambulance Service responded to 131,806 calls in 2011, an increase of 5% from the 125,603 calls in 2010. Emergency calls made up 96% of the total calls responded. The remaining 2.3% were non-emergency calls and another 2.2% were false alarms. Please see **Table B1** for the breakdown on type of calls:

| Description | Jan – Dec 2010 | Jan –Dec 2011 | Absolute Change | % Change |
|---------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Emergency Calls | 120,474 | 125,966 | 5,492 | 4.6 % |
| Non-Emergency Calls | 2,131 | 2,995 | 864 | 40.5 % |
| False Alarms | 2,998 | 2,845 | -153 | -5.1 % |
| Total Calls | 125,603 | 131,806 | 6,203 | 4.9 % |

Table B1: Breakdown on Type of Ambulance Calls

RISE IN NON-EMERGENCY CALLS

2. The number of non-emergency calls rose from 2,131 cases to 2,995 cases in 2011. As can be seen from **Table B2** below, the percentage of non-emergency calls constituted 2.3 % of the total EAS calls that SCDF responded in 2011. This is an increase from the 1.7% of the total calls responded in 2010.

| Non-Emergency Calls | Jan- Dec 2010 | Jan- Dec 2011 |
|---------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Number of Calls | 2,131 | 2,995 |
| % of Calls | 1.7% | 2.3% |

Table B2: Number of Non-Emergency Ambulance Calls

4. In order to curb the increase in the number of non-emergency ambulance calls, SCDF will step up public education efforts on the use of its Emergency Ambulance Services through exhibitions, distribution of posters and leaflets. For medical cases that are non-life threatening, the public is urged to call 1777 for the non-emergency ambulance services run by the private ambulance operators. This will allow more emergency resources to be channelled towards life threatening

cases.

INCREASE IN EMERGENCY CALLS

5. The number of emergency calls rose from 120,474 cases in 2010 to 125,966 cases in 2011. Of the 125,966 emergency calls, 71.4% were medical cases (e.g. cases involving chest pain, breathlessness, unconsciousness and cardiac arrest), 10.6% were road traffic accidents and 18.0% were related to other trauma cases (e.g. industrial accidents, falls and assaults). Please see **Table B3** for the breakdown of emergency calls.

| Description | Jan – Dec 2010 | Jan – Dec 2011 | Absolute Change | % Change |
|------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|
| Medical Emergency | 86,322 | 89,944 | 3,622 | 4.2% |
| Road Traffic Accidents | 12,432 | 13,319 | 887 | 7.1% |
| Other Trauma Cases | 21,720 | 22,703 | 983 | 4.5% |
| Total | 120,474 | 125,966 | 5,492 | 4.6% |

Table B3: Breakdown of Emergency Ambulance Calls

PRIVATE AMBULANCE OPERATORS TO RUN MORE EMERGENCY AMBULANCES

6. Since June 2009, SCDF has engaged the services of two Private Ambulance Operators (PAO) to supplement its fleet of operational ambulances. The 10 additional private emergency ambulances are deployed at designated SCDF fire stations and they have proven to be able to deliver the same high level of service standard provided by SCDF ambulances. With the introduction of private emergency ambulances, the overall number of calls responded within 11 minutes improved from 80.9% in 2008 to 84.7% in 2011.

7. Over the next two years, SCDF will be working with the PAOs to increase their fleet of ambulances as well as to increase their operating hours based on the projected demands. The increase will be carried out gradually and in phases to ensure that the PAOs continue to meet the service standards expected.

8. SCDF will continue to monitor the overall performance standard of the Emergency Ambulance Service to ensure that there are enough emergency ambulances to meet the increase in ambulance calls in future.

TOPIC C

FIRE SAFETY ENFORCEMENT STATISTICS (JAN – DEC 2011)

DECREASE IN NUMBER OF FIRE HAZARD ABATEMENT NOTICE (FHAN) AND NOTICE OF FIRE SAFETY OFFENCE (NFSO)

SCDF conducts fire safety enforcement checks on a regular basis to ensure that fire safety standards are well-observed and 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 our fire safety environment.

2. Between Jan to Dec 2011, SCDF conducted 11,983 enforcement checks, an increase of 413 from the 11,570 checks conducted in 2010. Arising from the 11,983 enforcement checks in 2011, 2,632 FHANs were issued. This is a decrease of 12.8 % from the 3,017 FHANs issued in 2010. The FHAN serves as a warning to building owners and management to remove the fire hazard.

| Description | Jan -Dec 2010 | Jan- Dec 2011 | Absolute Change | % Change |
|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| No of Enforcement Checks | 11570 | 11983 | 413 | 3.6% |
| No of FHANs issued | 3017 | 2632 | -385 | -12.8% |
| No of NFSOs issued | 2183 | 2164 | -19 | -0.9% |

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

3. A Notice of Fire Safety Offence (NFSO) instead of a FHAN is issued when the contravention is of serious nature and warrants a heavier penalty, for example, when unauthorised fire safety works are carried out. It carries with it a composition fine of between \$300 and \$500. A total of 2,164 NFSOs were issued in 2011, a decrease of 0.9% from the 2,183 NFSOs issued in 2010.

4. The lower number of FHANs and NFSOs issued could be attributed to the efforts of building owners and fire safety managers in identifying and removing potential fire hazards, thus resulting in lesser number of violations detected.

OBSTRUCTION TO EXITS AND FIRE ENGINE ACCESSWAYS IS MAIN CONTRIBUTING FACTOR FOR FHANs

5. The most common fire hazard resulting in FHANs in 2011 was the obstruction to exits and fire engine accessways. During fire outbreaks, such obstructions can impede the smooth evacuation of occupants from the affected premises and also affect

SCDF's early mitigation efforts. Although the number of FHANs for this offence continues to be high, it is encouraging to note that there is a drop of 13.1% from the number of FHANs issued in 2010, as shown in **Table C2**.

| Type of Fire Hazard | Jan – Dec 2010 | Jan – Dec 2011 | Absolute Change | % Change |
|---|----------------|----------------|-----------------|----------|
| Obstruction (exits/fire engine accessway) | 756 | 657 | -99 | -13.1% |

Table C2: Fire Hazard Abatement Notice

UNAUTHORISED CHANGE OF USE IS MAIN CONTRIBUTING FACTOR FOR NFSOs

6. The main contributing offence for the NFSOs issued was unauthorised change of use, which saw a slight increase of 0.5% in 2011. Of the 1,183 NFSOs issued for unauthorised change of use, a large proportion was due to the unauthorised change of use of premises to workers' dormitories, detected during our inspections. Such fire safety violations may have serious consequences, affecting the early mitigation of fires and impede evacuation in case of fires.

| Type of Offence | Jan -Dec 2010 | Jan- Dec 2011 | Absolute Change | % Change |
|----------------------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------|----------|
| Unauthorised change of use | 1177 | 1183 | 6 | 0.5% |

Table C3: Notice of Fire Safety Offence

SCDF TAKES FIRM ACTION ON FIRE SAFETY VIOLATIONS

7. SCDF takes violations of fire safety requirements seriously and will not hesitate to take firm actions against building management who do not promptly take action to rectify fire safety violations despite warnings and fines. Court action will be taken for serious cases. For general fire safety violations, the maximum penalty can be up to \$10,000 and/or a 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.

8. Between Jan to Dec 2011, 49 charges were filed for court actions against fire safety offenders. Majority of the charges were for unauthorised change of use. Of the 49 court actions, 53% (26 cases) were for unauthorised change of use.

| Type of Offence | Jan -Dec 2010 | Jan- Dec 2011 | Absolute Change |
|-----------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------|
|-----------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------|

| | | | |
|----------------------------|-----|----|-----|
| Unauthorised change of use | 102 | 26 | -76 |
|----------------------------|-----|----|-----|

Table C4: Court Action

9. On 1 October 2011, a company was fined a total of \$4,000 for two counts of fire safety infringements related to change of use without approval. The company had illegally converted the internal driveway area and part of the first storey of the industrial premises at 20 Benoi Crescent to workers' dormitories. The illegal workers' dormitories did not possess the required additional fire safety measures needed for the change of usage and thus posed a fire risk to the occupants residing within the premises.

ENHANCED FIRE SAFETY GUIDELINES ON THE USE OF COMMON AREAS IN HDB ESTATES

10. Over the years, the SCDF has been working closely with the Town Councils to reduce the number of fires in HDB estates. For example, since 2009, fire safety banners highlighting the common types of residential fires have been displayed at prominent locations within the housing estates. The SCDF has also been engaging the Town Councils to provide updates on fire safety issues through dialogues and briefings.

11. Fires involving discarded items at common spaces in HDB estates form the second biggest component of residential fires, accounting for 22% of the total residential fires in 2011.

12. As the agency responsible for the management and maintenance of the common property of HDB estates, Town Councils play an important role in ensuring that the housing estates are fire safe. Any public feedback received by SCDF relating to fire safety violations in HDB common areas is directed to the Town Councils for their follow-up action.

13. The Town Councils are responsible for the monitoring and removal of fire hazards like the obstruction of corridors, staircases, discarded items at common areas. They are also responsible to ensure that fire protection facilities (e.g. landing valves risers, hoses) in common areas are regularly maintained and serviceable. Poorly maintained fire protection facilities and obstructions of common areas can significantly affect early mitigation and rescue efforts during fire fighting operations.

14. To enhance the level of fire safety in HDB estates and for more consistency in fire safety management among the Town Councils, SCDF, in consultation with HDB and Town Councils has developed more specific guidelines on the safe and acceptable use of common corridors. The enhanced guidelines streamline the practice on the use of common corridors and facilitate the Town Councils in managing such usage. Common public feedback received by SCDF on fire safety

violations in HDB estates were taken into consideration in developing the enhanced guidelines. A circular on the enhanced Fire Safety Guidelines has been provided to all Town Councils in Jan 2012. Please see Annex A for the Fire Safety Guidelines.

15. SCDF in collaboration with the NFEC and Town Councils will be conducting a public education campaign to promote greater awareness on fire safety and educate the residents on the enhanced fire safety guidelines. The campaign will be rolled out in Feb 2012. Publicity posters will be displayed at Town Councils' and Residents' Committees' notice boards, Community Clubs. Pamphlets will be distributed during Emergency Preparedness Days and Community Emergency Preparedness Programme. The SCDF will also work with the Community Emergency Response Teams to distribute the materials during the post fire public education blitz.

16. SCDF is also working with relevant agencies to explore ways to monitor and measure the Town Council's performance in ensuring fire safety standards in their respective estates through indicators such as number of fire safety violations and number of fire occurrences, with the objective of improving the overall state of fire safety in all residential estates.