

CHAPTER 6

Fire Services Department

<p>Fire protection and prevention work of the Fire Services Department</p>

**Audit Commission
Hong Kong
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This audit review was carried out under a set of guidelines tabled in the Provisional Legislative Council by the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee on 11 February 1998. The guidelines were agreed between the Public Accounts Committee and the Director of Audit and accepted by the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

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FIRE PROTECTION AND PREVENTION WORK OF THE FIRE SERVICES DEPARTMENT

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FIRE PROTECTION AND PREVENTION WORK OF THE FIRE SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Executive Summary

1. The fire protection and prevention work of the Fire Services Department (FSD) aims to reduce fire hazards in the community and to ensure that appropriate fire protection measures are provided in buildings and premises. For 2013-14, the estimated expenditure is \$369 million. The Audit Commission (Audit) has recently conducted a review of the FSD's fire protection and prevention work (paras. 1.2, 1.4 and 1.7).

Monitoring fire service installations and equipment in buildings

2. The Fire Service (Installations and Equipment) Regulations (Cap. 95B) require: (a) owners of fire service installations and equipment (FSIs) to have them inspected by registered FSI contractors annually; and (b) FSI contractors to forward a copy of the inspection certificates (FS251) to the FSD within 14 days after inspection (paras. 2.3 to 2.5).

3. *Monitoring maintenance of FSIs.* In 2012, the FSD launched a new computer system to support its fire protection work. As the FSD had not completed updating and verifying the system's data of FSIs installed in 47,000 buildings, the system could only be used to identify buildings without FS251 (i.e. no evidence of having conducted annual inspections). For buildings with FS251s, the system could not ascertain whether the inspections had covered all the FSIs installed. In April 2013, the FSD found that no FS251 was received for 20,690 (44% of 47,000) buildings, suggesting that annual inspection had not been conducted on their FSIs (paras. 2.8 to 2.10 and 2.12).

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4. ***Monitoring rectification of defective FSIs.*** Audit analysis of the computer records revealed 7,662 reported cases of defective FSIs, of which 67% had remained outstanding for over 100 days. Audit has found that the FSD's laid-down guidelines on monitoring the rectification of defects in major FSIs had not always been complied with (paras. 2.16 to 2.19).

5. ***Monitoring unwanted alarm cases.*** In 2006, an FSD review found that unwanted alarms had taxed heavily on FSD resources and induced a number of negative consequences on the community. However, there were over 20,000 unwanted alarms in each subsequent year. Audit analysis of the 28,461 unwanted alarms in 2012 revealed 498 buildings each having 10 or more unwanted alarm cases. The FSD needs to give priority to following up such buildings (paras. 2.25, 2.27 and 2.29).

Monitoring licensed premises

6. ***Fire safety requirements on food premises and checking compliance.*** After receiving a notification from the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) of the grant of a provisional licence to food premises, FSD staff are required to conduct a verification inspection to check compliance with fire safety requirements within seven working days. Audit examination of 20 provisional licence cases revealed that: (a) there were delays in conducting some verification inspections; and (b) the FSD inspections found 17 cases of non-compliance with the requirement to submit invoices and test certificates of polyurethane foam filled mattresses and upholstered furniture. While the FSD issued advisory letters in all 17 cases, it only informed the FEHD of the non-compliance in 7 cases. For public safety, it is important to ensure that no food business is allowed to operate in premises not meeting the essential fire safety requirements (paras. 3.7 to 3.11).

7. ***Monitoring FSIs in licensed premises.*** The FSD has not used its new computer system to monitor the compliance with the statutory requirement of conducting annual inspections of FSIs in licensed premises because not all FSI data and FS251s have been input into the system. Audit examination revealed that no FS251 was received for some licensed premises for four years. There was no documentary evidence that the FSD had taken any enforcement action (paras. 3.14 and 3.16).

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Monitoring ventilating systems

8. The Building (Ventilating Systems) Regulations (Cap. 123J) and Ventilation of Scheduled Premises Regulation (Cap. 132CE) require ventilating systems to be inspected annually by specialist contractors registered with the Buildings Department. Specialist contractors are required to forward a copy of the inspection certificates to the FSD within 14 days after inspection (para. 4.3).

9. *Monitoring maintenance of ventilating systems.* Audit examination has revealed the following issues: (a) as the FSD started in 2001 to create records for monitoring the annual maintenance of ventilating systems installed in new buildings, the FSD's records of ventilating systems installed in pre-2001 buildings may not be complete; (b) due to system bugs, the FSD cannot use its computer system to match ventilating system records with the inspection certificate records so as to identify all ventilating systems not having been inspected annually; and (c) no inspection certificate was received for 60 ventilating systems (out of 602 cases examined by Audit) and enforcement action was not taken by the FSD (paras. 4.4 to 4.7).

Registration and monitoring of fire service installation contractors

10. *Improving the FSI contractor registration scheme.* The Fire Service (Installation Contractors) Regulations (Cap. 95A) governing the registration scheme for FSI contractors was enacted in 1971. An effective FSI contractor registration scheme will facilitate the FSD's work in ensuring the proper provision and maintenance of FSIs in buildings and premises. In April 2003, after a review of the scheme, a working group set up by the FSD made a number of recommendations to improve the scheme. Implementing the recommendations however requires legislative amendments. As at 31 August 2013, the recommendations had yet to be implemented (paras. 5.2 and 5.4 to 5.7).

11. *Monitoring FSI contractors.* The FSD has not established procedures to monitor the timeliness of submission of FS251s by FSI contractors. During the year ended 30 June 2013, the FSD received 124,685 FS251s from a total of 556 contractors. While FSI contractors are required by law to submit FS251s within 14 days after work completion, Audit analysis revealed that 29% of the FS251s were submitted late, involving a total of 470 contractors (para. 5.13).

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Handling complaints about fire safety

12. FSD staff are required to handle complaints about fire safety within specified time limits. However, Audit found cases of delay in handling the complaints, without documented reasons or approvals. As at 15 July 2013, there were 1,525 outstanding complaint cases, including 157 cases outstanding for over 360 days. Audit examination revealed that supervisors were not provided with regular reports for the monitoring and control of outstanding cases (paras. 6.4, 6.5 and 6.8 to 6.10).

Publicity and education on fire safety

13. The FSD has two announcements in the public interest (APIs) on the proper maintenance of FSIs which are now being broadcast on television. However, the statutory requirement to conduct annual inspections of FSIs is not mentioned in both APIs. As 44% of the buildings were found not complying with the requirement in April 2013 (see para. 3 above), the FSD should publicise the requirement in future APIs to help enhance public awareness (paras. 7.17 and 7.18).

Audit recommendations

14. **Audit recommendations are made in the respective sections of this Audit Report. Only the key ones are highlighted in this Executive Summary. Audit has *recommended* that the Director of Fire Services should:**

Monitoring fire service installations and equipment in buildings

- (a) **for buildings found without FS251 in 2012-13 to support the annual inspections of their FSIs, closely monitor the follow-up actions and take appropriate further measures to ensure timely compliance with the statutory annual inspection requirement (para. 2.14(a));**
- (b) **complete updating and verifying the FSI data in the new computer system as soon as possible, in order that the system can be used more effectively for monitoring the proper maintenance of all FSIs installed in buildings (para. 2.14(b));**

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- (c) **tighten the controls to ensure that FSD staff closely monitor the rectification of defects found in any major FSI (para. 2.21(b));**
- (d) **formulate further measures to reduce the overall number of unwanted alarms and give priority to following up buildings with many unwanted alarm cases (para. 2.30);**

Monitoring licensed premises

- (e) **remind FSD staff to conduct verification inspections of food business premises granted with provisional licences promptly in accordance with the FSD's guidelines (para. 3.12(a));**
- (f) **ensure that FSD staff handle cases of non-compliance with fire safety requirements by provisional food business licensees consistently (para. 3.12(b));**
- (g) **make effective use of the new computer system to monitor the maintenance of FSIs in licensed premises and take enforcement action in cases of non-compliance with the statutory annual inspection requirement (para. 3.18(b) and (c));**

Monitoring ventilating systems

- (h) **take appropriate measures to improve the monitoring of the maintenance of ventilating systems (para. 4.9(b));**

Registration and monitoring of fire service installation contractors

- (i) **in consultation with the Secretary for Security, determine as soon as possible how best to implement the working group's recommendations on improving the FSI contractor registration scheme (para. 5.8);**
- (j) **monitor the timeliness of submission of FS251s by FSI contractors and take appropriate actions to ensure their compliance with the statutory requirements in this regard (para. 5.17(a) and (b));**

Executive Summary

Handling complaints about fire safety

- (k) **provide supervisors with regular reports on the details of outstanding complaint cases to facilitate their monitoring and control work (para. 6.11(c)); and**

Publicity and education on fire safety

- (l) **publicise the statutory requirement on conducting annual inspections of FSIs in future APIs on fire prevention (para. 7.20(a)).**

Response from the Administration

- 15. The Administration agrees with the audit recommendations.

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 This PART describes the background to the audit and outlines the audit objectives and scope.

1.2 ***Fire Protection and Prevention Programme.*** The Fire Services Department (FSD) operates three programmes in accordance with the Fire Services Ordinance (Cap. 95): Fire Service, Fire Protection and Prevention, and Ambulance Service. The Fire Protection and Prevention Programme aims to reduce fire hazards in the community and to ensure that appropriate fire protection measures are provided in buildings and premises by owners/occupiers, who have primary responsibilities in this regard. The work under this Programme includes the following:

- (a) ***Fire service installations and equipment (FSIs).*** Fire protection measures include the provision of FSIs for the purposes of extinguishing, attacking, preventing or limiting a fire, giving warning of a fire and facilitating evacuation (Note 1). Examples of FSIs include sprinkler system, fire hydrant and hose reel system, fire alarm system and emergency lighting. The FSD publishes from time to time a Code of Practice specifying the minimum FSIs necessary for different types of buildings and premises. It vets building plans and conducts inspections to ensure the proper provision and maintenance of FSIs;
- (b) ***Licensed premises.*** The FSD is responsible for licensing storage or manufacture of dangerous goods (such as petrol and diesel but excluding explosives and liquefied petroleum gas), storage of timber and vehicles for conveyance of dangerous goods, and advising other Government authorities on fire protection measures for the purposes of licensing different types of premises (e.g. restaurants). It conducts inspections to ensure the fire safety of licensed premises;

Note 1: *Fire protection measures also include structurally-built fire safety elements (e.g. means of escape and fire fighting access). Such construction requirements fall within the purview of the Buildings Department.*

Introduction

- (c) ***Ventilating systems.*** The FSD conducts inspections of ventilating systems in buildings and premises, and ensures their proper maintenance;
- (d) ***FSI contractors (Note 2).*** The FSD is responsible for the registration and monitoring of FSI contractors;
- (e) ***Complaints.*** The FSD investigates complaints about fire safety and initiates law enforcement action when required; and
- (f) ***Publicity and education.*** The FSD organises fire safety publicity and education activities to inculcate a fire safety culture in Hong Kong and encourage greater community involvement in improving fire safety.

1.3 ***Enhancing fire safety of old buildings.*** To enhance the fire safety of old buildings for better protection of lives and properties, the Government enacted the following legislation empowering the Buildings Department (BD) and FSD to require owners/occupiers to provide additional fire safety measures which were not originally included in the approved building plans:

- (a) ***The Fire Safety (Commercial Premises) Ordinance (Cap. 502).*** The Ordinance, which came into operation in May 1997, requires owners/occupiers of prescribed commercial premises to upgrade their fire safety measures as directed by the BD/FSD. The Ordinance was amended in 1998 to expand its scope to cover pre-1987 commercial buildings; and
- (b) ***The Fire Safety (Buildings) Ordinance (Cap. 572).*** The Ordinance, which came into operation in July 2007, requires owners/occupiers of all pre-1987 composite or domestic buildings to carry out fire safety improvement works as directed by the BD/FSD.

The work of the FSD in enforcing the two Ordinances is also included as part of its Fire Protection and Prevention Programme.

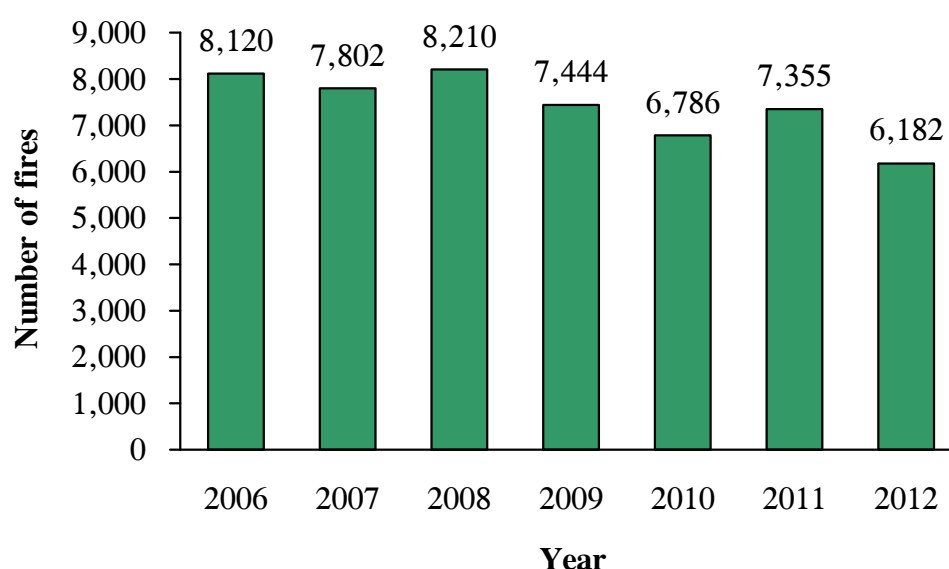
Note 2: *In this Audit Report, “FSI contractor” means a fire service installation contractor registered under the Fire Service (Installation Contractors) Regulations (Cap. 95A — see para. 5.2).*

1.4 The FSD conducts the Fire Protection and Prevention Programme mainly through two of its seven Commands, namely the Fire Safety Command and the Licensing and Certification Command (see Appendix A). The expenditure on the Programme is met from the Government General Revenue Account. For 2013-14, the estimated expenditure is \$369 million, mainly including the costs of 506 staff. Of the 506 staff, 177 working in the two Building Improvement Divisions are responsible for enforcing the two Ordinances in paragraph 1.3 to enhance the fire safety of old buildings.

1.5 Figures 1 and 2 show the fire statistics for the past seven years.

Figure 1

**Number of fires
(2006 to 2012)**

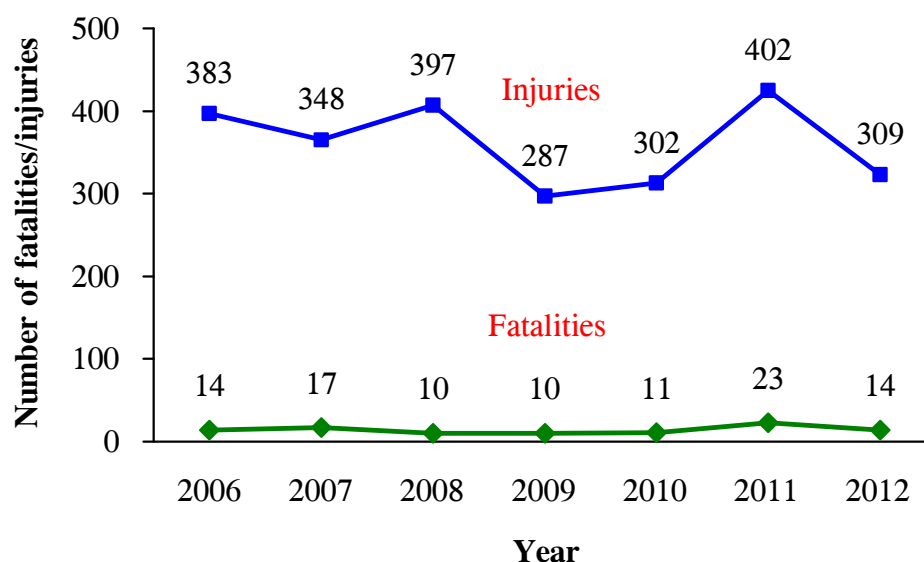


Source: FSD records

Remarks: The number of fires refers to real fire incidents and does not include unwanted and false alarm cases (see para. 2.24).

Figure 2

**Fatalities and injuries in fires
(2006 to 2012)**



Source: FSD records

Audit reviews

1.6 In 1998 and 2004, the Audit Commission (Audit) conducted two audit reviews of fire safety in buildings. The results were reported, respectively, in the Director of Audit's Report No. 31 of October 1998 (Chapter 5 "Fire safety of buildings") and the Director of Audit's Report No. 43 of October 2004 (Chapter 11 "Upgrading of fire safety standards in old buildings").

1.7 More recently, Audit has conducted a review of the FSD's fire protection and prevention work, focusing on the following areas:

- (a) monitoring FSIs in buildings (PART 2);
- (b) monitoring licensed premises (PART 3);
- (c) monitoring ventilating systems (PART 4);

- (d) registration and monitoring of FSI contractors (PART 5);
- (e) handling complaints about fire safety (PART 6); and
- (f) publicity and education on fire safety (PART 7).

Audit has found room for improvement in the above areas and has made a number of recommendations to address the issues.

1.8 Audit has conducted a separate review of the work on enhancing fire safety of old buildings undertaken by the BD and FSD (see para. 1.3). The results are reported in Chapter 7 of the Director of Audit's Report No. 61.

General response from the Administration

1.9 The Director of Fire Services agrees with the audit recommendations.

1.10 The Secretary for Security has said that he noted and welcomes the audit recommendations to improve the fire protection and prevention work of the FSD. The FSD will, in consultation with relevant departments, follow up on the recommendations. He will closely monitor the progress of those follow-up actions and ensure that the recommendations are implemented as far as possible in a timely manner.

Acknowledgement

1.11 Audit would like to acknowledge with gratitude the full cooperation of the staff of the FSD during the course of the audit review.

PART 2: MONITORING FIRE SERVICE INSTALLATIONS AND EQUIPMENT IN BUILDINGS

2.1 This PART examines the FSD’s monitoring work in ensuring the proper maintenance of FSIs in buildings, focusing on:

- (a) monitoring maintenance of FSIs (paras. 2.10 to 2.15);
- (b) monitoring rectification of defective FSIs (paras. 2.16 to 2.22);
- (c) monitoring unwanted alarm cases (paras. 2.23 to 2.31); and
- (d) promoting use of electronic form (paras. 2.32 to 2.38).

2.2 The Fire Service Installations Task Force (hereinafter referred to as the “Task Force”) of the Licensing and Certification Command is responsible for ensuring that FSIs in buildings are properly maintained (Note 3). It monitors the maintenance of the FSIs and the rectification of defective FSIs. It also conducts inspections proactively.

Maintenance of FSIs

2.3 The Fire Service (Installations and Equipment) Regulations (Cap. 95B) require that the owner (Note 4) of any FSI shall:

Note 3: *In respect of the provision of FSIs in a new building, the responsibilities for vetting building plans and conducting acceptance inspections rest with the New Projects Division of the Fire Safety Command and the Fire Service Installations Division of the Licensing and Certification Command, respectively. The BD will not issue an occupation permit unless the FSD has certified that the FSIs shown on the vetted building plans have been properly installed in the building.*

Note 4: *According to the Fire Services Ordinance, in respect of any FSI, “owner” includes the occupier or the owner of the premises in which the FSI is installed.*

Monitoring fire service installations and equipment in buildings

- (a) keep such FSI in efficient working order at all times; and
- (b) have such FSI inspected by an FSI contractor at least once in every 12 months.

Form FS251

2.4 The Fire Service (Installations and Equipment) Regulations also require that:

- (a) no FSI shall be installed, maintained, inspected or repaired in any premises by any person other than an FSI contractor; and
- (b) whenever an FSI contractor installs, maintains, inspects or repairs any FSI, he shall within 14 days after completion of the work issue to the person on whose instructions the work was undertaken a certificate and forward a copy thereof to the FSD.

2.5 The FSD requires FSI contractors to prepare their certificates using a standard form named as Form FS251 Certificate of Fire Service Installations and Equipment (FS251). Information to be reported in an FS251 includes the name and address of the building, the work completion date and the following:

- (a) ***Annual inspection.*** Where an annual inspection of FSIs has been conducted, the types (Note 5) and locations of the FSIs and their conditions should be reported;
- (b) ***Other works.*** Where other works such as FSI installation or repair works have been conducted, the nature of works conducted, the types and locations of the FSIs and their conditions should be reported; and
- (c) ***Defects.*** Where defective FSIs have been identified, the types and locations of the FSIs, the outstanding defects and the remedial actions required should be reported.

Note 5: *In total, there are 35 types of FSIs, each represented by a code (e.g. “28” means sprinkler system).*

Monitoring fire service installations and equipment in buildings

FSI and FS251 records

2.6 For the purpose of monitoring FSI owners' compliance with the statutory requirement to conduct annual inspections of their FSIs (see para. 2.3(b)), the FSD needs to maintain the following records:

- (a) ***FSI records.*** The FSD needs to maintain records of the FSIs installed in each building in accordance with the building plans. These records show what FSIs in each building are subject to the annual inspection requirement; and
- (b) ***FS251 records.*** The FSD needs to maintain records of all FS251s received from FSI contractors. These records show what FSIs in which buildings have been inspected by FSI contractors and when the inspections have been conducted.

By matching FS251s received against the FSI records, the FSD may ascertain whether an annual inspection has been conducted by an FSI contractor for an FSI. Where no FS251 has been received for an FSI, it is a prima facie case of non-compliance with the statutory requirement to conduct annual inspections.

Implementation of a new computer system

2.7 During February 2001 to March 2012, the FSD used a commercial off-the-shelf information system to support its fire protection work, including maintaining FSI records. According to the FSD, due to system limitations, the system could not match the FS251s received against the FSI records. As such, it could not facilitate the identification of the FSIs without FS251 (i.e. non-compliance with the annual inspection requirement).

2.8 In April 2012, the FSD launched a new customised Integrated Licensing, Fire Safety and Prosecution System (LIFIPS — Note 6) to better support its operational needs. The enhanced functions include greater storage and information

Note 6: *With an approved funding of \$33 million in 2007, LIFIPS was developed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the licensing, fire safety inspection and prosecution processes.*

Monitoring fire service installations and equipment in buildings

sharing capability and more efficient processing of electronic forms. The functions of LIFIPS support maintaining FSI and FS251 records, and matching of these records. Since April 2012, the FSD has maintained details of FS251s received in LIFIPS. According to the FSD, given that most of the FS251s submitted were not using electronic form (see paras. 2.32 to 2.38), substantial manual data inputting efforts have been required in this regard.

2.9 According to the FSD, substantial staff resources have been required to create the FSI records in LIFIPS, as follows:

- (a) due to differences in design, the building address and FSI data in the old system were required to be restructured and converted into usable data before they could be transferred to LIFIPS. By April 2013, the FSD had completed the creation in LIFIPS of about 47,000 records of buildings with FSIs installed (Note 7); and
- (b) after creating the building and FSI records in LIFIPS, the FSD conducted an exercise to verify their accuracy and completeness, including data updating and rectifying any missing or inaccurate FSI data. As at 15 July 2013, the exercise of updating and verifying the building FSI data was still in progress.

Monitoring maintenance of FSIs

2.10 In April 2013, the FSD used LIFIPS to match the 47,000 building records with the records of some 135,000 FS251s received for the 12 months since April 2012. The FSD found 20,690 buildings (44%) which had not been reported in any of the FS251s, suggesting prima facie that no annual inspection was conducted on any FSI in these buildings. The FSD issued advisory letters (Note 8) to the owners, occupiers or management offices of these buildings to advise them of

Note 7: *Building records in LIFIPS include building blocks and certain building facilities such as a shopping mall or car park under building blocks. For example, two building records will be created for a building with a shopping mall.*

Note 8: *When any irregularity is identified, the FSD may issue an advisory letter to urge the persons concerned to rectify the irregularity. An advisory letter is not a legal document and no deadline is set for compliance.*

Monitoring fire service installations and equipment in buildings

the requirement to commission FSI contractors to conduct annual inspections/maintenance of the FSIs.

Follow-up of the 2012-13 non-compliance cases

2.11 Audit is concerned that annual inspections had not been conducted for the FSIs in 44% of the buildings in 2012-13. The fire protection in these buildings could be compromised if their FSIs are not in proper working order. However, by 31 August 2013, the FSD was still not able to provide Audit with detailed information on which buildings it had received FS251s after issuing the advisory letters (Note 9). In Audit's view, the FSD needs to closely monitor the follow-up actions taken by the owners, occupiers or management offices of such buildings without FS251 and take appropriate further measures (e.g. issuing warning letters — Note 10) to ensure timely compliance with the statutory requirement of conducting annual inspections of FSIs.

Need to strengthen monitoring

2.12 Audit noted that in the April 2013 exercise, the FSD used the building records in LIFIPS for matching with the FS251 records because it had not yet completed updating and verifying the building FSI data (see para. 2.9(b)). Such matching can only identify buildings without FS251 (no evidence of having annual inspection) but cannot ascertain whether an inspected building has all its FSIs covered in the annual inspection (Note 11). In Audit's view, the FSD needs to complete the updating and verification work as soon as possible, in order that LIFIPS can be used more effectively for monitoring the annual inspections of all FSIs installed in each building by highlighting those not reported in any FS251. For each non-compliance case, it needs to analyse for how long an FSI has not been

Note 9: *The FSD only indicated that it received a total of 92,430 FS251s during the four months ended 31 July 2013 (after the issue of advisory letters in April 2013), a 61% increase over the 57,531 FS251s received for the corresponding period in 2012.*

Note 10: *A warning letter gives a warning of possible legal action if the irregularity identified is not rectified within a specified period.*

Note 11: *For example, if 20 types of FSIs are installed in a building and only one type has been inspected, the building will be reported in the FS251 for that inspection. Therefore, in the matching exercise the building will not be shown as a building without FS251.*

Monitoring fire service installations and equipment in buildings

inspected. In following up on FSIs not inspected, priority should be given to key FSIs not inspected for a long period.

2.13 Ensuring the proper maintenance of FSIs is an important part of the FSD's fire prevention and protection work. The non-compliance rate for annual inspection of FSIs is a useful indicator to reflect the adequacy of the FSD's efforts in publicity, education and law enforcement. In Audit's view, the FSD needs to closely monitor the non-compliance rate to assess whether additional efforts in certain areas are needed to enhance compliance.

Audit recommendations

2.14 **Audit has *recommended* that the Director of Fire Services should:**

- (a) **for buildings found without FS251 in 2012-13 to support the annual inspections of their FSIs, closely monitor the follow-up actions of the owners, occupiers or management offices and take appropriate further measures to ensure timely compliance with the statutory annual inspection requirement;**
- (b) **complete updating and verifying the LIFIPS data on FSIs installed in buildings as soon as possible, in order that LIFIPS can be used more effectively for monitoring the proper maintenance of all FSIs installed and highlighting FSIs without annual inspection;**
- (c) **follow up on FSIs without annual inspection, with priority to be given to key FSIs not having been inspected for a long period; and**
- (d) **closely monitor the overall non-compliance rate for annual inspection of FSIs to assess whether additional efforts in certain areas are needed to enhance compliance.**

Response from the Administration

2.15 The Director of Fire Services agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

Monitoring fire service installations and equipment in buildings

- (a) since April 2013, over 30,000 advisory letters have been issued to buildings found without FS251 in the preceding 12 months. Having analysed the majority of those buildings without FS251, the FSD notes that they are mainly small houses. Their fire risk is relatively low and minor FSIs such as fire extinguishers and sand buckets are required to be provided;
- (b) the FSD has diverted efforts to quicken the input of FS251s received recently into LIFIPS. It will identify those buildings without FS251 for further enforcement actions;
- (c) furthermore, the FSD has uploaded a new poster onto its website in the form of a pop-up to remind the public about the statutory requirement of annual inspection of their FSIs;
- (d) the FSD has employed temporary staff to input/update building FSI data in LIFIPS and expects to complete the work in early 2014. Upon completion, the FSD can match FS251s with building FSI records for effective monitoring of maintenance status of all building FSIs and flag up those without annual inspection for enforcement actions. The FSD would adopt a risk-based analysis to prioritise the enforcement actions; and
- (e) the FSD will enhance LIFIPS to strengthen the monitoring of the overall non-compliance rate for annual maintenance of FSIs.

Monitoring rectification of defective FSIs

2.16 The FSD has provided its staff with guidelines on monitoring the rectification of defective FSIs reported in FS251s, as follows:

- (a) when receiving an FS251, the Task Force would check if there is a report of defects in any major FSI (Note 12). If there is such a report, it shall notify the responsible fire station via LIFIPS within two working days;

Note 12: *Sprinkler system, fire hydrant and hose reel system, fire alarm system, street fire hydrant system, dry riser and smoke extraction system are major FSIs.*

Monitoring fire service installations and equipment in buildings

- (b) after receiving the notification from the Task Force, the responsible fire station would conduct a risk assessment within 24 hours. If warranted by the situation, it shall issue an advisory letter to urge the FSI owners to rectify the defects and to require them to provide additional fire safety measures during the suspension of the FSI;
- (c) the Task Force shall monitor the progress and development of the case. After 74 days from the date of referral to the responsible fire station, if there is no FS251 reporting the complete rectification of the defects, the Task Force would take necessary inspection/enforcement action, such as issuing a warning letter or a Fire Hazard Abatement Notice (FHAN — Note 13), within 18 working days until the defects are rectified; and
- (d) where defects in any non-major FSI are reported in an FS251, the Task Force shall within two working days issue an advisory letter to urge the FSI owners to rectify the defects (Note 14).

Monitoring rectification of defects in major FSIs

2.17 Audit analysis of LIFIPS records revealed 7,662 reported cases involving defects in major FSIs which remained outstanding as at 5 August 2013. Table 1 shows an ageing analysis of these cases.

Note 13: *According to the Fire Services (Fire Hazard Abatement) Regulation (Cap. 95F), the Director of Fire Services may, if satisfied of the existence of a fire hazard, issue a FHAN requiring the responsible persons to abate the fire hazard within a specified period. A person who fails to comply with a FHAN commits an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine of \$100,000 and a further fine of \$10,000 for each day during which the offence continues.*

Note 14: *With effect from September 2012, the Task Force is required to check the rectification progress of 3% of the cases involving defects in non-major FSIs annually.*

Table 1

**Ageing analysis of outstanding cases involving defects in major FSIs
(5 August 2013)**

Outstanding period (Note) (Day)	Number of cases
100 or less	2,552 (33 %)
101 to 150	973 (13 %)
151 to 200	1,069 (14 %)
201 to 250	997 (13 %)
251 to 350	1,375 (18 %)
Over 350	696 (9 %)
Total	7,662 (100 %)

5,110 (67%)

Source: Audit analysis of FSD records

Note: The outstanding period for each case was counted from the date it was created in LIFIPS by the Task Force.

2.18 In accordance with the FSD's guidelines, the responsible fire station should have conducted a risk assessment of each case involving defects in any major FSI (see para. 2.16(b)). However, in 147 of the 7,662 cases shown in Table 1, there was no documentary evidence that such risk assessment had been conducted.

2.19 Table 1 shows that 5,110 cases (67%) had been outstanding for over 100 days. Such cases required inspection/enforcement action (see para. 2.16(c)). Audit examined 20 cases and found that:

- (a) in seven cases, after conducting inspections the case officers had proposed different follow-up actions (e.g. issuing a warning letter or FHAN). However, the supervisors had not given any instruction. No further actions had been taken after a lapse of 146 to 299 days;

Monitoring fire service installations and equipment in buildings

- (b) in three other cases, the supervisors made comments in the files that follow-up inspections were required. However, no such inspections had been conducted after a lapse of 61 to 68 days; and
- (c) in the remaining 10 cases, the Task Force had received FS251s reporting that the defects had been rectified. However, it had taken no action to close the cases in LIFIPS after a lapse of 152 to 314 days.

2.20 The lack of timely follow-up actions on major FSIs found with defects could have serious consequence when a fire occurs. In Audit's view, the FSD needs to monitor closely the timely rectification of defects found in major FSIs.

Audit recommendations

2.21 **Audit has *recommended* that the Director of Fire Services should:**

- (a) **remind FSD staff of the need to monitor the rectification of defective FSIs in accordance with the guidelines;**
- (b) **tighten the controls to ensure that:**
 - (i) **the responsible fire station conducts a risk assessment of each case involving defects in any major FSI; and**
 - (ii) **the Task Force closely monitors the rectification of defects in such cases for taking prompt follow-up actions, particularly for cases outstanding for a prolonged period; and**
- (c) **take follow-up action on the 20 outstanding cases in paragraph 2.19, which involved defects found in major FSIs.**

Response from the Administration

2.22 The Director of Fire Services agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

Monitoring fire service installations and equipment in buildings

- (a) all concerned officers have been reminded to strictly adhere to the guidelines in following up rectifications of defective FSIs;
- (b) the FSD will take measures to ensure that all fire stations follow guidelines in conducting risk assessments of buildings with defects in major FSIs and take appropriate follow-up/enforcement actions;
- (c) the FSD will closely monitor the rectification of defects. Since full implementation of LIFIPS in April 2012, the FSD has monitored the maintenance status of FSIs more effectively. As a result, there was an upsurge of cases to be handled by the Task Force and outstanding cases to be followed up. To deal with the additional caseloads, reshuffling of duties among staff has been made to assist the supervisors to expedite follow-up actions. Additional features will be added to LIFIPS to flag up overdue cases for case officers to take follow-up actions; and
- (d) the 20 cases identified by Audit have been vetted by supervisors and appropriate follow-up actions have been taken to complete the cases as soon as possible.

Monitoring unwanted alarm cases

2.23 The FSIs in many buildings include an automatic fire detection system to automatically detect a fire (Note 15) and activate an alarm. Where the signal of the system is connected with the FSD's Fire Services Communication Centre (Note 16), the Centre can be alerted and start to respond before anyone in the building reports the incident.

2.24 An unwanted alarm is an alarm generated by the activation of an automatic fire detection system that is not prompted by the smoke, heat, combustion products

Note 15: *The detectors of the system will detect automatically the presence of smoke, heat, combustion products or flame.*

Note 16: *The Centre, manned round the clock, is responsible for mobilising fire-fighting and ambulance resources.*

Monitoring fire service installations and equipment in buildings

or flame of a fire (Note 17). In 2006, given that most of the automatic fire alarms received had been unwanted alarms instead of real fire incidents, the FSD formed a study group to conduct a review to identify ways to reduce the number of unwanted alarms.

2.25 In its report issued in 2006, the study group reported that unwanted alarms had taxed heavily on FSD resources (Note 18) and induced a lot of negative consequences on the community. Apart from disrupting normal fire station routines, training and administrative work of frontline staff, unwanted alarms desensitise the building occupants to the fire alarms and hence defeat the very basic function of the automatic fire detection system to give early warning and induce early evacuation.

2.26 Noting that many of the unwanted alarms were caused by inappropriate human activities (e.g. smoking near a smoke detector), the study group proposed to:

- (a) produce an advisory leaflet for distribution by fire station staff to the building management staff/occupants on the spot after attending an unwanted alarm call, with the aim of enhancing their understanding of the causes of unwanted alarms and minimising recurrence; and
- (b) make proactive visits to buildings with many unwanted alarm cases to give advice on the good practice in preventing unwanted alarms.

In 2009, the FSD produced the advisory leaflet mentioned in (a) above and started delivering it.

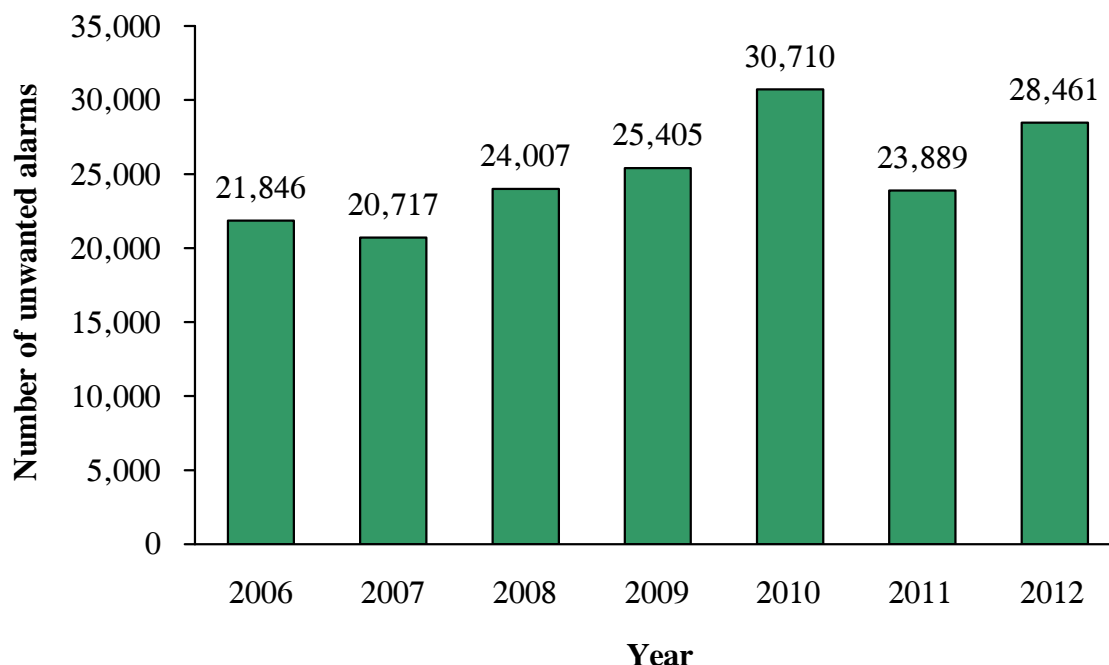
2.27 Figure 3 shows the number of unwanted alarms received in the past seven years.

Note 17: *Unwanted alarms may be triggered by different factors such as faulty systems and extremely humid weather. Unwanted alarms exclude false alarms. False alarms are fire calls received by the FSD but upon arrival there is/has been no fire or other calamity requiring assistance.*

Note 18: *After receiving any fire call, including a “fire” signal from an automatic fire detection system, the FSD will mobilise a fire appliance and at least six FSD staff to attend the call.*

Figure 3

**Number of unwanted alarms
(2006 to 2012)**



Source: FSD records

Remarks: There were 6,182 to 8,210 fires a year during the period (see Figure 1 in para. 1.5).

Reducing unwanted alarms

2.28 Figure 3 shows that except for 2007, all five subsequent years had more unwanted alarms than 2006, averaging 26,494 (i.e. 21% more than 21,846 in 2006). In Audit's view, in view of the adverse impact of unwanted alarms (see para. 2.25), the FSD needs to conduct a follow-up review to formulate further measures.

2.29 Audit noted that the FSD had not conducted analyses to identify buildings with many unwanted alarm cases. Audit analysis of the 28,461 unwanted alarms in 2012 revealed that:

- (a) there were 498 buildings each having 10 or more unwanted alarm cases in 2012; and

Monitoring fire service installations and equipment in buildings

- (b) of the 498 buildings in (a) above, there were two buildings (Buildings A and B) each having over 100 unwanted alarm cases a year between 2010 and 2012. For Building A (a hotel), in May 2013 the FSD met the hotel management and the FSI contractor, and obtained their commitment to conduct a comprehensive check of the automatic fire detection system with a view to reducing the number of unwanted alarms. For Building B (a composite building), however, no such action was taken.

In Audit's view, the FSD needs to give priority to following up buildings with many unwanted alarm cases, including conducting periodic analyses of such buildings and approaching building owners/occupiers to find out ways to reduce unwanted alarms.

Audit recommendations

2.30 **Audit has *recommended* that the Director of Fire Services should:**

- (a) **conduct a follow-up review to formulate further measures to reduce the overall number of unwanted alarms; and**
- (b) **conduct regular analyses to identify buildings with many unwanted alarm cases and give priority to following up such cases, with a view to reducing the number of their unwanted alarms.**

Response from the Administration

2.31 The Director of Fire Services agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

- (a) proactive actions have been taken by the Task Force to investigate premises/buildings with high incidence of unwanted alarms since May 2013;
- (b) an internal guideline was issued in September 2013 requiring all fire station commanders to refer repeated unwanted alarm cases to the Task Force for investigation; and

Monitoring fire service installations and equipment in buildings

- (c) the FSD will set up a working group to review and explore ways to reduce the number of unwanted alarms in the long run.

Promoting use of electronic form

2.32 As mentioned in paragraph 2.8, one of the enhanced functions of LIFIPS is more efficient processing of electronic forms. With effect from 2012, an FSI contractor may input relevant data into an electronic form of FS251, print the FS251 (together with pages containing barcodes) and then submit a copy to the FSD (Note 19). The FSD will then scan the barcodes to input the FS251 data into LIFIPS electronically, saving the manual data inputting efforts (Note 20).

2.33 The FSD's main promotional activities on the use of the electronic form of FS251 included the following:

- (a) **December 2011.** The FSD informed FSI contractors that LIFIPS would be launched in the first quarter of 2012, and advised them to use the electronic form of FS251 to facilitate data input into LIFIPS and for better FSI records management (Note 21);
- (b) **January 2012.** The FSD organised two briefing sessions for FSI contractors to help them gain more insight into the electronic form of FS251 and other online services provided by LIFIPS;
- (c) **July 2012.** The FSD issued letters to FSI contractors to encourage them to switch to the electronic form of FS251; and

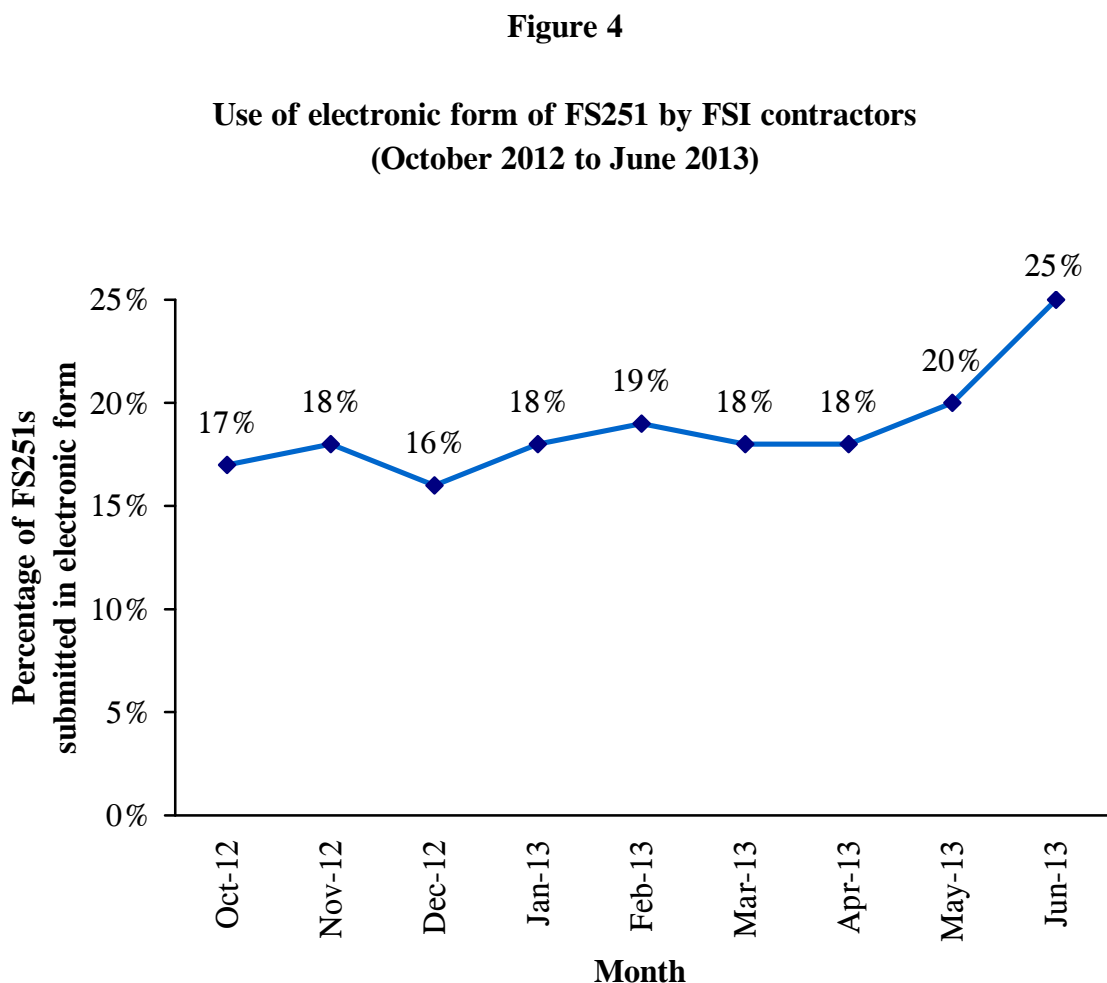
Note 19: *According to the FSD, online submission of FS251s is supported by LIFIPS but is not allowed under the Fire Service (Installations and Equipment) Regulations, which specify that only a "copy" of an FS251 shall be forwarded to the FSD. This issue can be resolved if the proposed legislative amendment of requiring FSI contractors to have their FS251s endorsed by the FSD before issuing them to FSI owners is passed (see paras. 5.5(e) and 5.6).*

Note 20: *The electronic form is free of charge while the printed forms cost \$62 per book of 100 forms.*

Note 21: *During the design of the electronic form, the FSD had consulted the FSI contractor's association.*

- (d) **April and June 2013.** The FSD visited two major FSI contractors to demonstrate the use of the electronic form of FS251 and explain the benefits of using it.

2.34 Figure 4 shows the use of the electronic form of FS251 by FSI contractors.



Source: FSD records

2.35 In 2007 when seeking funding approval for implementing LIFIPS, the FSD informed the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council that it estimated that over half of the FSI contractors might submit their FS251s by electronic means. However, as shown in Figure 4, in June 2013 only 25% of the FS251s received were using electronic form. In Audit's view, the FSD needs to step up efforts to promote the use of the electronic form of FS251.

Monitoring fire service installations and equipment in buildings

2.36 According to Audit analysis, in June 2013, 132 (69%) of the 190 major FSI contractors (Note 22) submitted their FS251s not using the electronic form. The FSD, in particular, needs to find out the reasons for not using the electronic form and take appropriate measures to encourage them to adopt it.

Audit recommendations

2.37 **Audit has *recommended* that the Director of Fire Services should:**

- (a) **step up efforts to promote the use of the electronic form of FS251; and**
- (b) **find out the reasons why many major FSI contractors did not use the electronic form of FS251 and take appropriate measures to encourage them to adopt it.**

Response from the Administration

2.38 The Director of Fire Services agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

- (a) the use of electronic form of FS251 is not mandatory at present. Some FSI contractors are reluctant to use it mainly because it cannot seamlessly match their business operational mode; and
- (b) in addition to organising more briefings and visits to the FSI contractors, the FSD will consider further means to promote the adoption and usage of the electronic form of FS251.

Note 22: *For analysis purpose, an FSI contractor who submitted 100 or more FS251s during the year ended 30 June 2013 was regarded as a major FSI contractor. The FS251s submitted by major FSI contractors during the period accounted for 92% of the FS251s received by the FSD.*

PART 3: MONITORING LICENSED PREMISES

3.1 This PART examines the FSD's monitoring work in ensuring that licensed premises (see para. 3.2) comply with the fire safety requirements and related fire protection work, with focus on:

- (a) fire safety requirements on food premises and checking compliance (paras. 3.5 to 3.13);
- (b) monitoring FSIs in licensed premises (paras. 3.14 to 3.19);
- (c) inspections of licensed premises (paras. 3.20 to 3.25); and
- (d) combating illicit fuel filling activities (paras. 3.26 to 3.33).

3.2 Licensed premises mean the premises in which the relevant authorised activities specified in a licence may be carried on. The following divisions of the Licensing and Certification Command are responsible for monitoring the fire safety of such premises:

- (a) the Dangerous Goods Division handles premises for storage or manufacture of dangerous goods and storage of timber, and vehicles for conveyance of dangerous goods. The FSD is the licensing authority for these activities; and
- (b) the two Regional Offices (i.e. Hong Kong and Kowloon West, and the New Territories and Kowloon East) assist in monitoring the fire safety of premises under the purview of other Government licensing authorities, including the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) for certain types of food premises (e.g. restaurants, factory canteens and food factories), karaoke establishments in restaurants, theatres and cinemas, the Education Bureau for schools (Note 23) and the Social Welfare Department for child care centres.

Note 23: *In this context, schools refer to non-purposely built schools and non-local higher and professional education courses operating in non-exempted premises.*

Monitoring licensed premises

3.3 A licence applicant will not be granted a licence unless the premises concerned comply with, among others, the fire safety requirements issued by the FSD. The FSD formulates the requirements based on the results of an on-site fire risk assessment. It checks compliance with the requirements by conducting verification inspections and vetting the supporting documents submitted by the applicant.

3.4 As at June 2013, according to FSD records, there were about 33,200 licensed premises, including 21,100 food premises.

Fire safety requirements on food premises and checking compliance

3.5 The FSD has promulgated standard fire safety requirements on various types of food premises, including FSI provision and other requirements, for reducing the probability, mitigating the effect and limiting the spread of fire. In respect of each licence application, the FSD will conduct an on-site fire risk assessment to formulate customised fire safety requirements for issuing to the licence applicant for compliance.

3.6 In accordance with the Food Business Regulation (Cap. 132X), the FEHD may, upon application, grant a provisional licence for carrying on a food business in the premises concerned provided that some basic requirements have been complied with, including the submission of a certificate of compliance with the fire safety requirements (Note 24). The provisional licensing system is intended to be a business-facilitation measure. The provisional licence, valid for six months, enables the licensee to carry on the food business on a provisional basis, pending the issue of a full licence. However, the FEHD may cancel the provisional licence if non-compliance with any fire safety requirements or other specified requirements is found.

3.7 The FSD has provided its staff with the following guidelines on checking food premises' compliance with the fire safety requirements:

Note 24: *The certificate should be signed by qualified persons as specified, including FSI contractors.*

- (a) FSD staff should conduct a verification inspection within seven working days after receipt of the FEHD's notification of the grant of a provisional licence;
- (b) where the verification inspection reveals any fire safety requirements not fully complied with, a letter should be issued to advise the provisional food business licensee to take immediate remedial action and report compliance upon completion in order that the FSD can conduct a follow-up inspection. In the case of non-compliance with major fire safety requirements (e.g. failure to meet flammability standards for polyurethane foam filled mattress and upholstered furniture items), the FEHD should be informed in parallel for issuing a warning letter or cancelling the provisional licence (Note 25); and
- (c) fire services certificates should be issued within seven working days after confirmation of compliance with all the fire safety requirements.

Delays in conducting verification inspections

3.8 Audit examined 20 food business cases with provisional licences granted during the year ended 30 June 2013. In 15 cases, verification inspections were conducted within seven working days after receipt of the FEHD's notification of the grant of a provisional licence thus complying with the FSD's guidelines. However, in the other five cases, there were delays of 4 to 28 working days in conducting the verification inspections. In Audit's view, the FSD needs to remind its staff to conduct verification inspections promptly in accordance with its guidelines.

Handling non-compliance with fire safety requirements

3.9 In all the 20 cases (see para. 3.8), the FSD specified the following fire safety requirements in respect of polyurethane foam:

Note 25: *According to the FEHD policy, in the case of the first breach of a fire safety requirement, a warning letter will be issued to warn the provisional food business licensee to take action to rectify the breach within 12 days. In the case of failure to comply with a warning to rectify the breach of the fire safety requirement, or a subsequent breach of the same requirement, the provisional licence will be cancelled.*

Monitoring licensed premises

- (a) all polyurethane foam filled mattresses and upholstered furniture should conform to the specified standards; and
- (b) invoices from manufacturers/suppliers and test certificates from testing laboratories indicating that the polyurethane foam filled mattresses and upholstered furniture have complied with the specified standards should be produced for verification.

The FSD's verification inspections revealed full compliance with the fire safety requirements in only three cases. In the other 17 cases, the provisional food business licensees could not produce the invoices and/or test certificates mentioned in (b) above.

3.10 In all the 17 non-compliance cases, the FSD issued letters to advise the provisional food business licensees to take immediate remedial action. However, it informed the FEHD in parallel in seven cases only and there were no documented reasons for not doing the same for the other 10 cases (Note 26).

3.11 As mentioned in paragraph 3.6, the provisional licensing system enables the licensee to carry on food business on a provisional basis, pending the issue of a full licence. However, for public safety, it is important to ensure that no food business is allowed to operate in premises not meeting the essential fire safety requirements. In Audit's view, the FSD needs to ensure that its staff handle cases of non-compliance consistently in accordance with the laid-down guidelines (see paras. 3.9 and 3.10).

Audit recommendations

3.12 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Fire Services should:**

Note 26: *Audit noted that in those cases whereby the FEHD had issued warning letters, the licensees generally submitted the required invoices and/or test certificates in shorter time.*

- (a) **remind FSD staff to conduct verification inspections of food business premises granted with provisional licences promptly in accordance with the FSD's guidelines; and**
- (b) **ensure that FSD staff handle cases of non-compliance with fire safety requirements by provisional food business licensees consistently.**

Response from the Administration

3.13 The Director of Fire Services agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

- (a) the FSD has issued an internal guideline with effect from 30 August 2013 that inspection officers should liaise with the provisional food business licensees or their representatives to schedule a verification inspection within seven working days after the receipt of notifications of the grant of provisional licences. If the inspection could not be carried out within seven working days, the reasons should be documented;
- (b) the FSD and FEHD commissioned a consultant in 2012 to look into, among others, the feasibility of requiring provisional licence applicants to submit a full set of polyurethane foam documents to the FEHD before a provisional licence is issued. It was found that there were genuine difficulties for the applicants to obtain a full set of the required documents because the furniture supplier would keep those documents until the applicants completed the outstanding payments; and
- (c) in the light of the trade's concerns, the FSD and FEHD have worked out an alternative that after the issue of provisional licence by the FEHD, the FSD would inspect the premises within seven days. During the FSD inspection, the licensee would need to provide a copy of delivery note (indicating that the furniture items are made from certified material, etc.). The FSD would then grant a six-week grace period for the submission of the concerned invoices and test certificates. The Food and Health Bureau/FEHD plan to consult the relevant Legislative Council Panel within the fourth quarter of 2013 with a view to implementing the measure as early as possible.

Monitoring FSIs in licensed premises

3.14 Same as for FSIs installed in buildings, the owner of any FSI in licensed premises is required to arrange annual inspections of the FSI, and an FSI contractor is required to submit an FS251 to the FSD within 14 days after completing the inspection work (see paras. 2.3 and 2.4). However, the FSD has not used LIFIPS to monitor the compliance with the statutory requirement of conducting annual inspections of FSIs in licensed premises. As at July 2013:

- (a) the input of the FSI data into LIFIPS was still in progress for food premises and that for other licensed premises had not commenced;
- (b) FS251s covering licensed premises had not been completely input into LIFIPS (Note 27); and
- (c) as a result, LIFIPS could not be used to match the FSI data of licensed premises with the FS251s received, to identify FSIs not supported by FS251s.

Monitoring FSIs through compliance checks

3.15 The FSD checks the compliance of premises for storage or manufacture of dangerous goods and storage of timber with the fire safety requirements, including the annual inspections of FSIs, before renewing their licences annually. For some licensed premises (e.g. cinemas), the licensees are also required to renew their licences with the licensing authorities annually. In these cases, the FSD examines their FS251s as part of its compliance check. However, the FSD's monitoring of FSIs for the following types of premises has the following inadequacies:

- (a) for food premises (which do not require the FSD's endorsement of compliance with fire safety requirements for licence renewal) and schools and child care centres (both not requiring renewal of registration), the FSD does not conduct compliance check; and

Note 27: *As at July 2013, the two Regional Offices had about 3,280 FS251s not yet input into LIFIPS. The Dangerous Goods Division does not input FS251s into LIFIPS.*

- (b) for premises requiring the FSD's endorsement for biennial licence renewal (e.g. karaoke establishments), the FSD conducts compliance check only in the second year of the licence period.

3.16 Audit examination of 20 licensed premises selected from the types of premises mentioned in paragraph 3.15(a) and (b) revealed cases of non-compliance with the requirement to conduct annual inspections of FSIs. Of the 20 premises, the FSD did not receive any FS251 in respect of 14 in 2012-13, 18 in 2011-12, 14 in 2010-11 and 12 in 2009-10. For seven premises in particular, the FSD did not receive any FS251 in all the four years (see Table 2). For each non-compliance case, there was no documentary evidence that the FSD had taken any enforcement action (e.g. issuing a warning letter).

Table 2

**Audit examination of 20 licensed premises
(2009-10 to 2012-13)**

Type of premises	Number of premises				
	FS251 not received for 1 year	FS251 not received for 2 years	FS251 not received for 3 years	FS251 not received for all 4 years	Total
Food premises	1	3	3	3	10
School	–	2	–	2	4
Child care centre	–	–	2	2	4
Karaoke establishment	–	2	–	–	2
Total	1	7	5	7	20

Source: Audit analysis of FSD records

Monitoring licensed premises

3.17 Ensuring the proper maintenance of FSIs is an important part of the FSD's fire prevention and protection work. The non-compliance of licensed premises with the requirement to conduct annual inspections revealed in Audit sample check suggests that more work should be done in this regard.

Audit recommendations

3.18 **Audit has *recommended* that the Director of Fire Services should:**

- (a) **review the monitoring mechanism for the FSIs in licensed premises;**
- (b) **based on the review results in (a) above, determine how to make effective use of LIFIPS to monitor the maintenance of FSIs in licensed premises; and**
- (c) **take enforcement action as appropriate in cases of non-compliance with the statutory annual FSI inspection requirement (including those mentioned in para. 3.16).**

Response from the Administration

3.19 The Director of Fire Services agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

- (a) the FSD is building a database in LIFIPS for FSIs of licensed premises starting from general restaurants, light refreshment restaurants and factory canteens to facilitate monitoring of the FSIs in licensed premises. The database is expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2014. The FSD will then review the effectiveness and efforts with a view to making effective use of LIFIPS to monitor the maintenance of FSIs in all licensed premises, having regard to the available resources;
- (b) the FEHD plans to impose fire safety requirement for renewal of licence such that licence would only be renewed when there are valid FS251s of the premises. The Food and Health Bureau/FEHD plan to consult the relevant Legislative Council Panel within the fourth quarter of 2013 with a view to implementing the measure as early as possible; and

- (c) the FSD would follow up and take appropriate enforcement actions against cases of non-compliance with the statutory requirement to conduct annual inspections of FSIs, including the 20 cases examined by Audit.

Inspections of licensed premises

3.20 As part of its monitoring work on licensed premises, the FSD conducts inspections of selected premises proactively to identify whether there are fire hazards (e.g. obstruction or locking of means of escape and defective FSIs or lack of maintenance of FSIs). Where fire hazards are identified, FSD staff are required to take enforcement action (e.g. issuing a FHAN) against the operator, and in parallel inform the licensing authority and require the licensee to take remedial action. Since 2012, the FSD has adopted a risk-based approach for conducting inspections, so that higher risk premises are subject to more frequent inspections. Table 3 shows the target and actual numbers of inspections of food premises, schools and child care centres in 2012 and 2013.

Monitoring licensed premises

Table 3

**Inspections of licensed premises
(2012 and 2013)**

Type of premises	Number of inspections			
	2012		2013	
	Target	Actual	Target	Actual (up to August)
Food premises with high fire risk (Note 1)	300	236	500	376
Food premises with medium fire risk (Note 1)	80	96	230	175
School and child care centre (Note 2)	120	86	120	93
Total	500	418	850	644

Source: FSD records

Note 1: The FSD classified the fire risks of food premises based on a number of criteria, including the location and floor area of the premises and whether there were sealed windows or combustible partitions. It selected food premises in each class randomly for inspection.

Note 2: The FSD selected schools and child care centres randomly for inspection.

3.21 According to the FSD records, as at July 2013, there were about 2,590 food premises with high fire risk, 18,200 food premises with medium fire risk and 4,970 schools and child care centres, totalling 25,760 premises. Table 3 shows that only 418 premises were inspected in 2012 and 850 premises were planned to be inspected in 2013. Audit examination revealed room for improvement in the allocation of inspection resources and the selection of premises for inspection. Details are in paragraphs 3.22 and 3.23.

Allocation of inspection resources

3.22 As shown in Table 3, for both 2012 and 2013, the FSD has set a higher inspection target for high-risk food premises. In 2012, the FSD actually conducted 236 inspections of high-risk food premises, 64 less than the target of 300. However, for medium-risk food premises, the FSD conducted 96 inspections, 16 more than the target of 80. This suggested room for improvement in allocating inspection resources. In Audit's view, in line with the risk-based approach, the FSD should have allocated more resources to high-risk food premises to help meet the target number of inspections.

Selection of premises for inspection

3.23 Audit examined 20 inspections conducted during the year ended 30 June 2013. In four cases, Audit noted the following:

- (a) ***Selected premises not in operation.*** In three cases of school inspection, the FSD officers found that there were no schools in operation thus not achieving the inspection objectives. For one of the three cases, the Education Bureau had already informed the FSD in 2008 of the cancellation of the provisional registration of the school, and for the other two cases, the Education Bureau had not approved the school registration applications. In Audit's view, the FSD needs to check as far as possible that selected licensed premises are really in operation before conducting inspections; and
- (b) ***Premises re-inspected within a short period.*** No irregularities were found in an inspection of a school. The FSD records however showed that the school was inspected again some five months later, again without irregularities found. There were no documented reasons for inspecting the school twice within a short period.

Audit recommendations

3.24 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Fire Services should:**

- (a) **follow the risk-based approach in allocating inspection resources and give priority to licensed premises with a high fire risk;**

Monitoring licensed premises

- (b) **establish procedures to ensure that licensed premises selected for inspection are really in operation; and**
- (c) **ascertain the reasons for inspecting the same school twice within a short period, as mentioned in paragraph 3.23(b), and take appropriate improvement measures.**

Response from the Administration

3.25 The Director of Fire Services agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

- (a) the FSD, based on the 2012 inspection results, adjusted its 2013 inspection targets so that more inspections of premises with comparatively higher risk could be carried out. The targets were worked out with a view to adopting a proactive risk-based monitoring mechanism with its existing tight resources. The FSD will regularly review its risk-based approach and inspection targets, and follow the risk-based approach in allocating inspection resources;
- (b) an internal guideline has been issued to require inspection officers to review/vet the case file in detail ensuring that the premises selected randomly for inspection are in operation before carrying out physical inspection;
- (c) the FSD will study with various licensing authorities the feasibility of a simple mechanism for periodically informing the FSD about those licensed premises which were no longer in operation; and
- (d) the FSD has completed the investigation into the case of inspecting the same school twice within a short period. It was found that the concerned officer was not familiar with the functions and available information in LIFIPS. To avoid recurrence of similar incidents, internal guidelines were issued to all inspection officers in September 2013.

Combating illicit fuel filling activities

3.26 Fuel oils, including petrol and diesel, are one type of dangerous goods controlled by the Dangerous Goods Ordinance (Cap. 295). They are inflammable and catch fire easily if stored improperly. The FSD is responsible for licensing their manufacture, storage and conveyance. Apart from ensuring that the licensees comply with the fire safety requirements, the FSD takes measures to combat illicit fuel filling activities (Note 28). Illicit fuel filling stations may pose significant fire risks particularly when they are set up in urban residential areas.

3.27 Depending on the mode of operation, illicit fuel filling activities may be in breach of a number of provisions under the purview of the FSD, including:

- (a) storage of dangerous goods in excess of exempt quantity without a licence, contravening the Dangerous Goods Ordinance;
- (b) storage of dangerous goods in bulk without approval or fuelling of vehicles directly from tank wagons, contravening the Dangerous Goods (General) Regulations (Cap. 295B); and
- (c) illegal possession of dangerous goods in premises for the purpose of a business of supplying fuel to a motor vehicle, contravening the Fire Services (Fire Hazard Abatement) Regulation.

Note 28: *The work to combat illicit fuel filling activities is carried out mainly by the Dangerous Goods Division. According to the FSD, the strength of 30 staff in the Division was established for coping with its licensing work. For combating illicit fuel filling activities effectively, the Division has redeployed four staff to form a dedicated team to carry out the required detection, investigation and enforcement duties.*

Monitoring licensed premises

3.28 Table 4 shows some statistics on combating illicit fuel filling activities.

Table 4
Statistics on combating illicit fuel filling activities
(January 2010 to June 2013)

	2010	2011	2012	2013 (up to June)
<i>Complaints and inspections</i>				
Number of complaints received	182	193	104	66
Number of inspections conducted in respect of the complaints	327	392	217	105
<i>Offences under the Dangerous Goods Ordinance or the Dangerous Goods (General) Regulations</i>				
Number of convicted cases	9	29	7	12
Average fine	\$1,478	\$2,103	\$2,013	\$1,392
<i>Offences under the Fire Services (Fire Hazard Abatement) Regulation</i>				
Number of convicted cases	27	33	47	16
Average fine	\$2,000	\$2,700	\$17,688	\$14,063

Source: FSD records

Forfeiture of illicit fuel

3.29 The FSD has explored and adopted various approaches to combat illicit fuel filling activities. For example, to avoid alerting perpetrators of illicit fuel filling stations, plain-clothes staff of the FSD would observe the activities before necessary enforcement action are taken by uniformed staff. To achieve greater deterrence, the FSD has tightened its policy of revoking licences granted to owners of tank wagons involved in illicit fuel filling activities. The FSD also conducts joint operations with the Customs and Excise Department and the Hong Kong Police Force regularly to raid illicit fuel filling stations to combat against evasion of duty

on the sale of dutiable fuel (Note 29) and illegal storage of petrol or diesel. Where any illicit fuel filling activities might constitute a breach of lease conditions, the FSD would inform the Lands Department to take necessary enforcement action. In addition, the FSD is liaising with oil companies to stop fuel oil supply to operators involved in illicit fuel filling activities. It also works with cross harbour tunnel companies to conduct surprise inspections to curb transporting of fuel in bulk by unapproved goods lorries.

3.30 Similar to other crimes, inflicting financial damages on the operators may be an effective way to combat illicit fuel filling activities. As shown in Table 4, the fines imposed on offenders averaged \$1,392 to \$17,688. Compared to the potential profits from selling illicit fuel, the amounts might not create a sufficient deterrent effect. According to the Dangerous Goods Ordinance, a magistrate may order a forfeiture of the dangerous goods with respect to which any offence against the Ordinance has been committed, whether any person has been charged with such offence or not. However, the FSD did not apply for such orders during the period concerned (i.e. January 2010 to June 2013).

3.31 In August 2013, upon enquiry, the FSD informed Audit that:

- (a) the FSD had included the forfeiture of illicit fuel in its action plan; and
- (b) some practical issues (including the need for identifying suitable storage space and the handling charges involved in engaging contractors to handle a large quantity of fuel seized) had to be addressed.

In Audit's view, in view of the significant fire risks posed by illicit fuel filling activities, the FSD needs to regularly review the effectiveness of the measures taken to combat such activities and take additional measures (e.g. forfeiture of illicit fuel) where necessary.

Note 29: *Evasion of duty may be in breach of Dutiable Commodities Ordinance (Cap. 109) which is under the purview of the Customs and Excise Department.*

Audit recommendations

- 3.32 **Audit has *recommended* that the Director of Fire Services should:**
- (a) **regularly review the effectiveness of the measures taken to combat illicit fuel filling activities; and**
 - (b) **take additional measures to combat illicit fuel filling activities where necessary.**

Response from the Administration

3.33 The Director of Fire Services agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

- (a) the FSD has been conducting regular reviews of the effectiveness of the measures taken to combat illicit fuel filling activities. The latest reviews in May and July 2013 revealed that the package of measures being adopted by the FSD had achieved the expected results with increased enforcement actions taken in the first half of 2013. The FSD will continue to review the effectiveness of the measures taken; and
- (b) the FSD will consider and take additional measures (such as forfeiture actions if situation warrants) to combat illicit fuel filling activities.

PART 4: MONITORING VENTILATING SYSTEMS

4.1 This PART examines the FSD's monitoring work in ensuring the proper maintenance of ventilating systems in buildings and premises, focusing on:

- (a) monitoring maintenance of ventilating systems (paras. 4.4 to 4.10); and
- (b) inspections of ventilating systems with defects (paras. 4.11 to 4.16).

4.2 The Ventilation Division of the Licensing and Certification Command is responsible for monitoring the fire safety of ventilating systems (Note 30) in buildings and licensed premises (including scheduled premises referred to in para. 4.3). As at June 2013, it maintained records of 51,200 ventilating systems (2,600 in buildings and 48,600 in premises).

Maintenance of ventilating systems

4.3 The Building (Ventilating Systems) Regulations (Cap. 123J) apply to ventilating systems that embody the use of ducting or trunking which passes from one compartment of the building to another. The Ventilation of Scheduled Premises Regulation (Cap. 132CE) applies to ventilating systems in scheduled premises (Note 31). These two categories of ventilating systems are subject to the following maintenance provisions:

- (a) every damper, filter and precipitator in any ventilating system shall be inspected at intervals not exceeding 12 months by a specialist contractor registered with the BD; and

Note 30: *A ventilating system, comprising air blowers and air ducts, maintains air movement in an indoor environment. Filters and/or precipitators installed in the system will filter the air passing through them so as to improve the air quality. When an air duct passes through compartment walls/floors, fire dampers shall be fitted in the duct to curb the spread of fire and smoke through the air duct system in case of fire.*

Note 31: *Scheduled premises comprise restaurants, dancing establishments, theatres, cinemas, funeral parlours and factory canteens licensed by the FEHD.*

Monitoring ventilating systems

- (b) a specialist contractor who inspects any ventilating system shall within 14 days of such inspection issue to the person on whose instructions the inspection was carried out a certificate and send a copy thereof to the FSD.

In practice, the contractors are given a standard form to prepare the certificate. They are required to report the defects observed, if any.

Monitoring maintenance of ventilating systems

4.4 Audit examination of the monitoring of the maintenance of ventilating systems revealed a number of issues requiring the FSD's attention. Details are in paragraphs 4.5 to 4.8.

4.5 ***Incomplete records of ventilating systems in buildings.*** The FSD started in 2001 to create records of ventilating systems installed in new buildings. For ventilating systems installed in pre-2001 buildings, records are created when they are identified from any inspection certificates received. For licensed premises in pre-2001 buildings, the FSD creates records of ventilating systems installed in such premises in connection with the licensing work (Note 32). As such, there may be incomplete records of ventilating systems installed in pre-2001 buildings if no inspection certificate is received. Such unrecorded systems are not subject to the FSD's monitoring.

4.6 ***Record matching not conducted.*** Unlike FSIs in buildings (see para. 2.10), due to system bugs, the FSD cannot use LIFIPS to match ventilating system records with the inspection certificate records so as to identify all ventilating systems without inspection certificate (i.e. non-compliance with the

Note 32: *According to the FSD, most ventilating systems in pre-2001 buildings having higher fire safety concerns are installed in licensed premises. These systems are monitored by the FSD in connection with its licensing work. The FSD will liaise with the licensing authorities to study the feasibility of establishing a comprehensive database for all ventilating systems on a licensed premises basis irrespective of the completion date and nature of the buildings. As a first step, the FSD has since July 2013 commenced verifying and updating the ventilating system records of all licensed food premises and expects to complete the work in the first quarter of 2014.*

statutory requirement to conduct annual inspections). In this connection, Audit noted that the FSD maintained records of some 51,200 ventilating systems (Note 33) but received only 17,506 inspection certificates during April 2012 to June 2013 (see para. 4.8).

4.7 No follow-up of ventilating systems not supported by inspection certificates. According to the FSD's guidelines, if an inspection certificate has not been received within 30 days after one year from the latest annual inspection of a ventilating system, a warning letter shall be issued to the owner. If an inspection certificate has still not been received within another 30 days, legal action shall be contemplated. Audit examination of 602 cases with the latest inspection conducted during April to June 2012 revealed that no inspection certificate had been received for 60 cases (10% of 602 cases) up to August 2013 (when over 30 days had elapsed after one year from the latest inspection). However, the FSD had not issued any warning letter or taken any follow-up action.

4.8 Delays in inputting inspection certificates. During April 2012 to June 2013, the FSD received 17,506 inspection certificates. As at 30 June 2013, it had only input 13,244 inspection certificates into LIFIPS, but had not done so for the remaining 4,262 certificates. For effective monitoring, the FSD needs to expedite its inputting work.

Audit recommendations

4.9 Audit has recommended that the Director of Fire Services should:

- (a) **review the issues relating to monitoring the maintenance of ventilating systems identified by Audit in paragraphs 4.5 to 4.8; and**
- (b) **take appropriate measures to improve the monitoring of the maintenance of ventilating systems.**

Note 33: *As at 2 July 2013, 40,858 of the 51,200 ventilating system records were maintained in LIFIPS. The FSD considers that some of the 51,200 records could turn out to be obsolete (as some restaurants could have closed business) after the verification and updating work mentioned in Note 32 to paragraph 4.5 is completed.*

Response from the Administration

4.10 The Director of Fire Services agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

- (a) the FSD is reviewing the issues and has been taking/will take appropriate actions to address them. For example, warning letters have been issued to owners of the ventilating systems for which no inspection certificates were received (see para. 4.7) and the system bugs that inhibit the record matching function are expected to be fixed by October 2013; and
- (b) after the system bugs of LIFIPS have been rectified and the ventilating system database verified and updated, LIFIPS should be able to automatically generate periodic reports of premises/buildings with their ventilating system inspection overdue. Monitoring of ventilating system inspections will become more efficient and effective.

Inspections of ventilating systems with defects

4.11 The FSD has provided its staff with the following guidelines on checking the accuracy of inspection certificates and handling cases where the contractors have reported defects in the ventilating systems:

- (a) on receipt of an inspection certificate reporting defects in the ventilating system, a warning letter requiring rectification of the defects shall be issued;
- (b) 2.5% of the inspection certificates shall be randomly selected for conducting inspections of the ventilating systems. Of these inspection certificates, about 80% shall be cases reporting defects in the ventilating systems and 20% shall be cases without defects reported; and
- (c) if an inspection found that any defects in the ventilating system constitute a fire hazard, a FHAN should be issued.

4.12 During April 2012 to June 2013, the FSD conducted a total of 429 inspections of ventilating systems to check the accuracy of the inspection certificates, comprising 72 cases (17%) with defects reported and 357 cases (83%) without defects reported. Of the 72 cases with defects reported, in 18 cases the FSD conducted inspections beyond 50 days after receiving the inspection certificates (see Table 5).

Table 5
Inspections of ventilating systems with defects
(April 2012 to June 2013)

Time lapsed between date of FSD inspection and date of receiving inspection certificate (Day)	Number of cases
5 or less	1 (2%)
6 to 10	3 (4%)
11 to 20	5 (7%)
21 to 30	24 (33%)
31 to 50	21 (29%)
Over 50	18 (25%)
Total	72 (100%)

Source: Audit analysis of FSD records

4.13 As mentioned in paragraph 2.16(b), for defects in a major FSI, the responsible fire station is required to conduct a risk assessment within 24 hours. However, in the case of defects in ventilating systems, there is no similar requirement on the Ventilation Division to conduct risk assessment. As serious defects in ventilating systems may constitute a higher fire risk, the FSD needs to consider whether the Ventilation Division should be similarly required to conduct risk assessments.

Monitoring ventilating systems

4.14 The FSD's guidelines on selection of inspection certificates for conducting inspections of the ventilating systems (see para. 4.11(b)) specify that:

- (a) random selection method shall be used; and
- (b) of the inspection certificates selected, about 80% shall be cases reporting defects in the ventilating system.

The requirement in (b) above may not always be achievable as seen in the FSD's inspections from April 2012 to June 2013 when only 17% of the selected inspection certificates were cases reporting defects (see para. 4.12). In Audit's view, the FSD needs to review the inspection guidelines and take improvement measures (e.g. rationalising the sample selection method).

Audit recommendations

4.15 **Audit has *recommended* that the Director of Fire Services should:**

- (a) **explore the need for requiring the Ventilation Division to conduct prompt risk assessments and inspections when receiving inspection certificates reporting serious defects in ventilating systems; and**
- (b) **improve the guidelines for inspecting ventilating systems.**

Response from the Administration

4.16 The Director of Fire Services agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that the FSD is considering requiring the Ventilation Division or other suitable units to conduct prompt risk assessments and inspections when receiving inspection certificates reporting serious defects in ventilating systems. Relevant guidelines will be reviewed and improved.

PART 5: REGISTRATION AND MONITORING OF FIRE SERVICE INSTALLATION CONTRACTORS

5.1 This PART examines the following issues relating to the registration and monitoring of FSI contractors:

- (a) improving the FSI contractor registration scheme (paras. 5.4 to 5.9); and
- (b) monitoring FSI contractors (paras. 5.10 to 5.18).

5.2 As mentioned in paragraph 2.4(a), the Fire Service (Installations and Equipment) Regulations specify that FSIs shall be installed, maintained, inspected or repaired only by FSI contractors registered with the FSD. The registration scheme for FSI contractors is governed by the Fire Service (Installation Contractors) Regulations. The Regulations contain the following provisions:

- (a) ***Classes of contractors.*** FSI contractors are classified into three classes (Classes 1 to 3) according to the work that they may undertake (Note 34). While a person, company or firm may apply as a Class 1 or Class 2 contractor, only a person may apply as a Class 3 contractor;

Note 34: *The work that the FSI contractors in each class may undertake is as follows:*

- (a) ***Class 1.*** *Install, maintain, repair and inspect any FSI (other than portable equipment) which contains an electrical circuit or other apparatus for the detection and warning, by alarm or otherwise, of smoke or fire;*
- (b) ***Class 2.*** *Install, maintain, repair and inspect any FSI (other than portable equipment) which contains:*
 - (i) *pipes and fittings designed or adapted to carry water or some fire extinguishing medium; or*
 - (ii) *any type of electrical apparatus other than those specified in Class 1; and*
- (c) ***Class 3.*** *Maintain, repair and inspect portable equipment.*

Registration and monitoring of fire service installation contractors

- (b) ***Minimum qualifications for registration.*** For registration as a Class 1 or Class 2 FSI contractor, the applicant or at least one of the applicant's directors, employees or partners should hold the specified qualifications (e.g. a degree in electrical engineering for Class 1, a diploma or higher certificate in electrical engineering and a Grade I plumber's licence for Class 2). For Class 3, the applicant should satisfy the FSD at a written examination and at an interview that he has adequate knowledge of the function and maintenance of portable equipment;
- (c) ***Termination of service of qualified person.*** An FSI contractor registered by virtue of the qualifications of a director, employee or partner should notify the FSD within 14 days after termination of service of the director, employee or partner. The FSD should remove the name of the contractor from the register; and
- (d) ***Disciplinary proceedings.*** If an FSI contractor has been convicted of an offence or has been guilty of improper conduct or negligence in the installation, maintenance, repair or inspection of any FSI, the FSD may refer the matter to the disciplinary board (Note 35). After inquiry, the disciplinary board may order that the name of the contractor be removed from the register permanently or for such period as it thinks appropriate, or that the contractor be reprimanded.

5.3 As at 11 July 2013, there were a total of 777 FSI contractors. The numbers of contractors registered in Classes 1, 2 and 3 were 266, 310 and 461 respectively (260 contractors registered in both Classes 1 and 2).

Improving the FSI contractor registration scheme

5.4 Both the Fire Service (Installations and Equipment) Regulations and Fire Service (Installation Contractors) Regulations were enacted in 1971. From time to time, new FSIs are introduced into the market and higher technical competence is

Note 35: *The board should consist of: (a) the Director of Fire Services or his representative; (b) a legal advisor appointed by the Director; (c) an FSI contractor nominated by the Director; (d) a public officer nominated by the Building Authority; (e) a public officer nominated by the Water Authority; and (f) a member of the committee of the Fire Insurance Association of Hong Kong nominated by that Association.*

Registration and monitoring of fire service installation contractors

required for handling more sophisticated systems. Pursuant to the Chief Executive's Policy Address 2000, the FSD set up a working group (Note 36) in December 2000 to conduct a review of the FSI contractor registration scheme. The objective was to enhance the professionalism, monitoring and control of FSI contractors to keep pace with the developments of the industry.

5.5 In April 2003, the working group completed the review. Its recommendations included the following:

- (a) ***Classes of contractors and minimum qualifications for registration.*** Under the existing classification, Class 2 FSI contractors may handle all FSIs other than those specified in Classes 1 and 3. The trade considered that Class 2 FSI contractors might not possess sufficient knowledge and expertise to handle such a wide range of FSIs. The working group recommended classifying FSI contractors into four classes and raising the minimum qualification requirements for registration to keep pace with the advance in FSI technology;
- (b) ***Renewal of registration.*** At present, FSI contractors are not required to renew their registration. To enhance control, the working group recommended requiring FSI contractors to apply for renewal of their registration every three years. The FSD should have the authority to reject an application having regard to, among others, the past performance of the applicant;
- (c) ***Disciplinary proceedings.*** Under the existing legislation, only FSI contractors are subject to disciplinary action. To establish a more comprehensive control mechanism, the working group recommended extending the powers of the disciplinary board to cover the qualified persons of FSI contractors and those authorised by them to sign FS251s;

Note 36: *The working group included representatives from five government departments (i.e. the FSD, BD, Architectural Services Department, Electrical and Mechanical Services Department and Housing Department), professional bodies and the trade.*

Registration and monitoring of fire service installation contractors

- (d) ***Prosecution.*** According to the Magistrates Ordinance (Cap. 227), the FSD cannot prosecute an FSI contractor for an offence under the Fire Service (Installation Contractors) Regulations or the Fire Service (Installations and Equipment) Regulations more than six months after the commission of the offence. To remedy this shortcoming, the working group recommended introducing provisions in the Regulations to specify that prosecution shall be commenced within six months after the offence becomes known to the FSD; and
- (e) ***Handling FS251s.*** To ensure proper receipt of FS251s by the FSD for monitoring the work undertaken by FSI contractors, the working group recommended requiring FSI contractors to have their FS251s endorsed by the FSD before issuing them to FSI owners. In addition, the working group recommended imposing a duty on FSI owners to display the FS251s on annual inspection on a conspicuous location of the FSI.

5.6 Implementing the working group's recommendations requires amendments to the Fire Services Ordinance, Fire Service (Installation Contractors) Regulations and Fire Service (Installations and Equipment) Regulations. Table 6 shows the implementation progress.

Table 6**Progress of implementing the working group's recommendations**

Date	Event
24 April 2004	The FSD submitted to the Security Bureau, for consideration and policy support, the draft drafting instructions for the proposed legislative amendments to implement the working group's recommendations.
29 May 2007	The Security Bureau asked the FSD whether there had been any new developments since 2004 that should be taken into account when considering the draft drafting instructions.
17 July 2009	The FSD provided the Security Bureau with information about some new developments (Note) required to be addressed by legislative amendments. The FSD indicated that, with the Security Bureau's policy support, it would incorporate the new developments into the draft drafting instructions.
16 December 2009 to 27 June 2011	The FSD held two meetings with the Security Bureau and provided some additional information to facilitate its consideration of the proposed legislative amendments. On 27 June 2011, the FSD submitted to the Security Bureau revisions to the draft drafting instructions incorporating the new developments since 2004. Up to August 2013, there was no further progress.

Source: FSD records

Note: The new developments included the proposed introduction of a registered fire engineer scheme for implementing third party fire safety certification, which would require legislative amendments to empower the registered fire engineers to inspect and test FSIs. The FSD conducted two rounds of consultation on the scheme in 2007-08 and 2011-12. As at 15 August 2013, it was still studying a business impact assessment report prepared by a consultant.

5.7 Audit is concerned about the lack of progress in implementing the working group's recommendations on improving the FSI contractor registration scheme. A more effective FSI contractor registration scheme will facilitate the FSD's work in ensuring the proper provision and maintenance of FSIs in buildings and premises. In Audit's view, the Security Bureau and FSD should strive to improve the FSI contractor registration scheme.

Audit recommendation

5.8 **Audit has *recommended* that the Director of Fire Services should, having regard to new developments (such as the current progress in implementing third party fire safety certification) and in consultation with the Secretary for Security, determine as soon as possible how best to implement the working group’s recommendations on improving the FSI contractor registration scheme.**

Response from the Administration

5.9 The Director of Fire Services agrees with the audit recommendation. He has said that the FSD has been revising the draft drafting instructions for the proposed legislative amendments to both the Fire Service (Installation Contractors) Regulations and Fire Service (Installations and Equipment) Regulations regarding the implementation of the working group’s recommendations on improving the FSI contractor registration scheme and would discuss with the Security Bureau for follow-up action.

Monitoring FSI contractors

5.10 Regulation 9(1) of the Fire Service (Installations and Equipment) Regulations states that whenever an FSI contractor installs, maintains, repairs or inspects any FSI, he shall within 14 days after completion of the work issue to the person on whose instructions the work was undertaken a certificate and forward a copy thereof to the FSD. Any FSI contractor who:

- (a) contravenes the regulation; or
- (b) issues or forwards a certificate thereunder, or a copy thereof, which is false or misleading in a material particular,

commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine of \$50,000.

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5.11 The FSD conducts field checks to monitor the performance of FSI contractors. During a field check, an FSD staff inspects the FSIs with the presence of the FSI contractor to assess whether the workmanship is satisfactory and give advice on the proper performance standard. The FSD uses a demerit point system to determine how frequent to conduct a field check on an FSI contractor. For example, an FSI contractor will be given three demerit points if he is rated unsatisfactory in a field check, and one demerit point will be deducted from his accumulated total when he passes a field check. The FSD conducts more field checks on FSI contractors with more demerit points accumulated, so as to monitor their performance more closely. For the year ended 30 June 2013, the FSD conducted a total of 951 field checks, in three of which the FSI contractors were rated as unsatisfactory.

5.12 As mentioned in paragraph 5.2(d), if an FSI contractor has been convicted of an offence or has been guilty of improper conduct or negligence in the installation, maintenance, repair or inspection of any FSI, the FSD may refer the matter to the disciplinary board. The Head of the Licensing and Certification Command is delegated the authority to approve the referral of cases to the disciplinary board for hearing. Between January 2011 and June 2013, the disciplinary board conducted three hearings (in April 2011, February 2012 and May 2013 respectively).

Monitoring timeliness of submission of FS251s

5.13 Audit noted that the FSD had not established procedures to monitor the timeliness of submission of FS251s by FSI contractors. During the year ended 30 June 2013, the FSD received 124,685 FS251s from a total of 556 contractors. While FSI contractors are required by law to submit FS251s within 14 days after work completion, Audit analysis revealed that 35,930 FS251s (29%) were submitted late, involving a total of 470 contractors. Table 7 shows the details.

Table 7

**Delays in submission of FS251s
(year ended 30 June 2013)**

Period of delay (Note) (Day)	Number of FS251s	
No delay	88,755	(71%)
10 or less	19,782	(16%)
11 to 30	9,079	(8%)
31 to 50	2,681	(2%)
51 to 100	1,533	(1%)
Over 100	2,855	(2%)
Total	124,685	(100%)

} 35,930 (29%)

Source: Audit analysis of FSD records

Note: FS251s are required to be submitted within 14 days after work completion. However, the FSD has not input into LIFIPS the dates of work completion and submission of FS251s. For the purpose of this analysis, the dates of signing FS251s by the FSI contractors and receipt of FS251s by the FSD available in LIFIPS were used instead.

5.14 Reviewing the FS251s submitted by FSI contractors is an important part of the FSD's monitoring of FSIs. Where defects in any major FSI in a building are reported in an FS251, the responsible fire station is required to conduct a risk assessment within 24 hours to determine what immediate actions are required (see para. 2.16(b)). As such, any delay in submitting an FS251 by an FSI contractor may prevent the FSD from taking timely action to abate fire hazards. In Audit's view, the FSD needs to establish procedures to monitor the timeliness of submission of FS251s by FSI contractors and take appropriate actions to ensure that they always comply with the statutory requirements (e.g. issuing warning letters to and instituting prosecution actions and disciplinary proceedings against non-compliant contractors). The proposed legislative amendment of requiring FSI

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contractors to have their FS251s endorsed by the FSD before issuing them to FSI owners (see paras. 5.5(e) and 5.6), if materialise, will facilitate the FSD's work in this regard.

Ensuring timely conduct of disciplinary board hearings

5.15 According to the FSD's guidelines:

- (a) disciplinary board hearings should be held as soon as possible. Any unreasonable delay in conducting a hearing may be taken as a ground for being unfair to the FSI contractor concerned; and
- (b) the Licensing and Certification Command has a bring-up system for cases approved for disciplinary board hearing such that cases may be regularly referred to the disciplinary board in a lot provided that the time lapse should not be more than six months.

5.16 Audit selected the disciplinary board hearing in May 2013 (see para. 5.12) to examine whether the guidelines were complied with. Audit found that, contrary to the guidelines, the time lapse between the date of approval for hearing and the date of hearing for all the nine cases heard was more than six months (ranged from 16 to 50 months, averaging 32 months). In Audit's view, the FSD needs to remind its staff to comply with the guidelines on conducting disciplinary board hearings in a timely manner.

Audit recommendations

5.17 **Audit has *recommended* that the Director of Fire Services should:**

- (a) **establish procedures to monitor the timeliness of submission of FS251s by FSI contractors;**
- (b) **take appropriate actions to ensure that FSI contractors always submit FS251s within 14 days after work completion in compliance with the Fire Service (Installations and Equipment) Regulations; and**

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- (c) remind FSD staff to comply with the guidelines on conducting disciplinary board hearings in a timely manner.

Response from the Administration

5.18 The Director of Fire Services agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

- (a) the FSD will write to FSI contractors to remind them of the importance and requirement of submitting FS251s on time as an interim measure and explore measures to monitor the timeliness of submission by making use of LIFIPS;
- (b) the FSD will also consider amending the relevant legislation and enhance LIFIPS (where needed) to allow direct electronic submission of FS251s by FSI contractors, which is not permitted under the current legislation. The electronic submission will facilitate submission of FS251s by FSI contractors and the FSD's monitoring of submission situation; and
- (c) an internal guideline has been revised and issued to all concerned officers to ensure the timely conduct of disciplinary board hearings.

PART 6: HANDLING COMPLAINTS ABOUT FIRE SAFETY

6.1 This PART examines the following issues relating to the handling of complaints about fire safety:

- (a) investigating complaints (paras. 6.4 to 6.7);
- (b) managing outstanding complaint cases (paras. 6.8 to 6.12); and
- (c) reporting performance on handling complaints (paras. 6.13 to 6.17).

6.2 Complaints about fire safety, usually received through letter, telephone or e-mail, include those about fire hazards (e.g. FSIs not in efficient working order and defects in ventilating systems) and those about dangerous goods (e.g. storing dangerous goods in excess of exempt quantity without a licence). Different divisions of the Fire Safety Command or the Licensing and Certification Command are responsible for investigating different types of complaints (Note 37). If a complaint is substantiated, the FSD will take appropriate follow-up action (e.g. issuing a warning letter or FHAN).

6.3 Since April 2012, the FSD has used LIFIPS to support the handling of complaints. During April 2012 to June 2013, the divisions of the Fire Safety Command or the Licensing and Certification Command received a total of 8,773 complaints, comprising 1,601 complaints about dangerous goods or fire hazards posing imminent danger and 7,172 other complaints.

Note 37: *Two types of complaints about fire hazards (i.e. obstruction of means of escape and locking of means of escape) are handled by fire stations under the FSD's three operational Commands. Such work, falling under the Fire Service Programme (see para. 1.2), was not covered in this audit review.*

Investigating complaints

6.4 Audit examined 60 complaint cases handled in 2012 to see whether FSD staff had investigated complaints promptly in accordance with the FSD's performance pledges and guidelines. Table 8 shows the results.

Table 8

Audit examination results of 60 complaint cases handled in 2012

Target complaint response time	Number of cases checked	Result
<i>Complaints about dangerous goods or fire hazards posing imminent danger</i>		
(a) Complaints investigated within 24 hours	15	Target was met in all 15 cases (100%).
(b) Complainants advised of the outcome within 12 working days		Target was met in 13 cases (87%). In 1 case, there was no documentary evidence that the complainant had been advised. In the remaining case, the complainant was advised after 13 working days.
<i>Other complaints</i>		
(c) Complaints investigated within 10 working days	45	Target was met in 39 cases (87%). In the other 6 cases, investigations were conducted after 13 to 89 working days. There were no documented reasons or approvals for the delays.
(d) Complainants advised of the outcome within 27 working days		Target was met in 30 cases (67%). In 13 other cases, there was no documentary evidence that the complainants had been advised. In the remaining 2 cases, the complainants were advised after 38 and 174 working days.
Total	60	

Source: Audit analysis of FSD records

6.5 As shown in items (b) to (d) of Table 8, there were cases of delay in investigating the complaints and advising complainants of the investigation outcome. In Audit's view, the FSD needs to ensure that its staff always handle complaints in accordance with its guidelines.

Audit recommendations

6.6 **Audit has *recommended* that the Director of Fire Services should:**

- (a) **remind FSD staff of the need to investigate complaints promptly; and**
- (b) **tighten controls to ensure that FSD staff comply with the complaint investigation requirements laid down in the FSD's guidelines.**

Response from the Administration

6.7 The Director of Fire Services agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that FSD staff have been reminded of the need to investigate complaints promptly and actions will be taken to facilitate and ensure their compliance with the complaint investigation requirements.

Managing outstanding complaint cases

6.8 As at 15 July 2013, the divisions of the Fire Safety Command or the Licensing and Certification Command had a total of 1,525 outstanding complaint cases. Table 9 shows an ageing analysis of these cases.

Table 9

**Ageing analysis of outstanding complaint cases
(15 July 2013)**

Time elapsed since receipt of complaint (Day)	Number of cases
30 or less	167 (11%)
31 to 90	457 (30%)
91 to 180	322 (21%)
181 to 360	422 (28%)
Over 360	157 (10%)
Total	1,525 (100%)

Source: Audit analysis of FSD records

6.9 As shown in Table 9, 157 complaint cases had been outstanding for over 360 days. Audit examined 20 (Note 38) of these 157 cases to see why they had been long outstanding. The audit findings are as follows:

- (a) ***Delays in following up warning letters or FHAN.*** In five cases, the complaints had been substantiated, and warning letters or a FHAN issued. There were delays in follow-up actions, as follows:
 - (i) in three cases, the supervisors instructed the case officers to conduct follow-up inspections by specified dates. However, up to 15 July 2013 (215 to 382 days after the specified dates), the case officers had not done so; and

Note 38: *The FSD had classified the 20 cases as complaints about fire hazards not posing imminent danger.*

- (ii) in the other two cases, the case officers had conducted two and five follow-up inspections respectively after issuing the warning letters, noting that the FSI owners had not taken the required actions. The supervisors instructed the case officers to conduct follow-up inspections again by specified dates. However, up to 15 July 2013 (217 and 122 days respectively after the specified dates), the case officers had not done so;
- (b) ***Delays in completing investigations.*** In eight cases, previous inspections conducted by case officers had been unable to determine whether the complaints were substantiated (e.g. could not gain access to the premises concerned). The supervisors instructed the case officers to conduct inspections again by specified dates. Up to 15 July 2013, the case officers had not done so (45 to 370 days after the specified dates) for six of the eight cases; and
- (c) ***Instructions not given by supervisors.*** In seven cases, after conducting investigations the case officers had made different proposals (e.g. closing the case or conducting inspection again by a specified date). After reviewing the case files, the supervisors had not given any instruction. Up to 15 July 2013 (223 to 425 days after the investigations), no further actions had been taken.

6.10 The audit findings suggest that supervisors need to improve their monitoring and control of outstanding complaint cases, including giving clear instructions to case officers and ensuring that they follow such instructions. Supervisors currently are not provided with regular reports on the details of outstanding complaint cases. In Audit's view, they need such reports to facilitate their monitoring and control work.

Audit recommendations

6.11 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Fire Services should:**

- (a) **remind supervisors of the need to give clear instructions to case officers for handling complaint cases and ensure that they follow such instructions;**

Handling complaints about fire safety

- (b) **remind case officers of the need to handle complaint cases in accordance with instructions given by their supervisors;**
- (c) **provide supervisors with regular reports on the details of outstanding complaint cases to facilitate their monitoring and control work; and**
- (d) **deal with the outstanding complaint cases as soon as possible, particularly those outstanding for a long period.**

Response from the Administration

6.12 The Director of Fire Services agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

- (a) the FSD has reminded supervisors and case officers of the complaint handling requirements;
- (b) the FSD will study the feasibility of introducing additional functions in LIFIPS with a view to providing periodic reports automatically to facilitate the monitoring and control work of the supervisors; and
- (c) the FSD will follow up the outstanding complaint cases and take appropriate follow-up actions as soon as possible.

Reporting performance on handling complaints

6.13 In the 2013-14 Controlling Officer's Report, under the Fire Protection and Prevention Programme, the FSD has set three performance targets in respect of handling complaints about fire safety. Table 10 shows the details.

Table 10

Performance targets in respect of handling complaints about fire safety

Target complaint response time	Target percentage	2011 Actual	2012 Actual	2013 Plan
Complaints about dangerous goods or reports of fire hazards posing imminent danger investigated within 24 hours	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %
Complaints about fire hazards not posing imminent danger investigated within 10 working days	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %
Complainants advised within 27 working days of outcome of investigation	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %

Source: FSD's 2013-14 Controlling Officer's Report

Ensuring accuracy of performance information

6.14 The Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau's guidelines require Controlling Officers to make sure that performance information in the Controlling Officer's Reports is substantiated and accurate. Table 10 shows that the target response times were achieved in all complaint cases in 2011 and 2012. However, Audit sample check of complaint cases handled in 2012 revealed that there were non-compliance cases (see Table 8 in para. 6.4). According to the FSD, it adopted a passive reporting mechanism whereby complaint handling divisions were required to report any incidence of non-compliance with the target response times. Since no such report was received, the target response times were considered as fully achieved. In Audit's view, the FSD needs to establish proper controls over the compilation of performance information on complaint handling.

Audit recommendation

6.15 Audit has *recommended* that the Director of Fire Services should establish control procedures to ensure that performance information on complaint handling set out in the Controlling Officer's Report is substantiated and accurate.

Response from the Administration

6.16 The Director of Fire Services agrees with the audit recommendation. He has said that the FSD will establish procedures to ensure accuracy of complaint handling performance information.

6.17 The Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury has said that he will keep in view the FSD's follow-up to the audit recommendation on performance information on complaint handling set out in the FSD's Controlling Officer's Report in the future.

PART 7: PUBLICITY AND EDUCATION ON FIRE SAFETY

7.1 This PART examines the FSD's publicity and education programmes on fire safety, focusing on the following:

- (a) Fire Prevention Campaign (paras. 7.3 to 7.7);
- (b) Building Fire Safety Envoy Scheme (paras. 7.8 to 7.16); and
- (c) announcements in the public interest (APIs) on fire prevention (paras. 7.17 to 7.21).

7.2 The Support Division of the Fire Safety Command is responsible for conducting publicity and education programmes on fire safety. Its work includes organising the annual Fire Prevention Campaign to educate the general public on fire safety, administering a Building Fire Safety Envoy Scheme to enhance public awareness of building fire safety, administering a Fire Safety Ambassador Scheme (Note 39), liaising with the Information Services Department for producing APIs on fire prevention, and producing television and radio programmes and various leaflets, posters, pamphlets and exhibits on fire safety.

Fire Prevention Campaign

7.3 During 2008 to 2012, except for 2010 (Note 40), the FSD organised a Fire Prevention Campaign annually as a major publicity event in promoting fire safety. The Campaign mainly included the production and broadcasting of an one-hour television programme to educate the general public on fire safety. The programme contents included a launching ceremony, speeches and artists'

Note 39: *The Fire Safety Ambassador Scheme was implemented in 1998. It trains volunteers from various sectors of the community for disseminating fire protection messages and promoting fire safety awareness. As at July 2013, about 132,000 Ambassadors had been appointed.*

Note 40: *In 2010, instead of organising a Fire Prevention Campaign, the FSD produced a television series.*

Publicity and education on fire safety

performances. The Campaign for each year focused on disseminating specific fire prevention messages. For example, the 2012 Campaign was aimed at educating the public on preventing fire both at home and at countryside. The cost of producing the 2012 television programme was \$1.4 million.

7.4 After completing the Campaign in each year, the FSD conducted a review of its effectiveness, mainly focusing on the number of viewers of the programme. As the viewing rates indicated that there were some one million viewers for each of the past four Campaigns, the FSD concluded that they were proven to be successful and cost-effective.

7.5 Audit noted that the FSD's review had not covered the audience's awareness levels of the fire safety messages disseminated by the Campaign in each year. The Good Practice Guide on Publicity Campaigns issued by the Information Services Department has laid down the following guidelines:

- (a) if funding allows, a market research company can be commissioned to conduct a survey to review the effectiveness of a publicity campaign;
- (b) in carrying out a survey, it is necessary to select relevant performance indicators to evaluate effectiveness. Common indicators are awareness levels of campaign messages and changes in public attitude or behaviour; and
- (c) where necessary, comparison can be drawn by polls conducted before and after the campaign.

In Audit's view, since the FSD has organised the annual Fire Prevention Campaign in the same form for four years, it may be opportune to conduct the above-mentioned survey to review its effectiveness.

Audit recommendation

7.6 Audit has *recommended* that the Director of Fire Services should consider the need to review the effectiveness of the annual Fire Prevention Campaign by commissioning a market research company to conduct a survey.

Response from the Administration

7.7 The Director of Fire Services agrees with the audit recommendation.

Building Fire Safety Envoy Scheme

7.8 The Building Fire Safety Envoy Scheme, launched in August 2008, aims at enhancing the fire safety management of buildings by recruiting the owners, occupants and property management staff as Envoys to look after the fire safety matters of their buildings. A 1.5-day training course is provided to all Envoys so as to strengthen their fire safety knowledge. The main duties of the Envoys include:

- (a) disseminating fire safety messages to occupants of their buildings;
- (b) reporting fire hazards or irregularities;
- (c) ensuring the effectiveness and proper maintenance of the FSIs in their buildings; and
- (d) assisting in organising fire drills and fire safety activities for the residents.

As at 31 July 2013, the FSD had appointed a total of 3,375 Envoys for 1,847 buildings.

7.9 Since October 2011, the FSD has implemented an award scheme to provide an incentive to encourage Envoys' active participation in building fire safety matters. Envoys will be awarded merit points for their reported contributions (e.g. 50 points for ensuring the annual inspections of the FSIs in their buildings). Those obtaining 350, 250 and 150 points will be given Gold, Silver and Bronze Awards respectively.

Publicity and education on fire safety

Encouraging Envoys' active participation in building fire safety matters

7.10 During October 2012 to July 2013, only 95 (3%) of the 3,375 Envoys reported that they had made contributions (totalling 230) to building fire safety (Note 41). Table 11 shows the details.

Table 11

**Envoys' contributions to building fire safety
(October 2012 to July 2013)**

Contribution	Number
Ensuring annual inspections of FSIs	87
Assisting in organising fire safety activities	67
Abating fire hazards	63
Reporting fire hazards	3
Others (e.g. contributing a newsletter article)	10
Total	230

Source: FSD records

Remarks: 70 Envoys reported more than one contribution.

7.11 Table 11 shows that 87 Envoys reported that they had ensured the annual inspections of FSIs in their buildings, discharging one of their main duties (see para. 7.8(c)). Audit examination of 20 other buildings with Envoys appointed revealed that no FS251 was submitted for four buildings to show that their FSIs had been inspected annually. However, the Envoys concerned had not reported any irregularities, suggesting that they might not have conducted any check in this

Note 41: *The FSD compiles these statistics for the purpose of awarding merit points only. After completion of the merit point awarding exercise for the year October 2011 to September 2012, the FSD has not kept the related statistics.*

regard. In Audit's view, the FSD needs to take appropriate measures to encourage Envoys to participate actively in building fire safety matters, particularly in respect of the annual inspections of FSIs as the FSD had found many buildings not complying with the requirement (see para. 2.10).

Recruiting Envoys for old buildings

7.12 In 2008, the FSD announced a four-pronged approach (publicity, enforcement, checking and partnership) to tackle fire hazards in old buildings. For each selected building, the FSD will conduct fire safety publicity before taking enforcement action against fire hazards. After all fire hazards have been cleared, the local fire station will conduct periodic checks, and owners, occupiers or management staff will be invited to serve as Envoys of the building. To take forward this new initiative, the FSD conducted a scouting survey of pre-1987 composite buildings and adopted a risk-based approach in the selection of buildings. The FSD estimated that about 2,300 pre-1987 composite buildings would require proactive and intensive enforcement. Up to 31 July 2013, 230 buildings had been selected for implementing the four-pronged approach and Envoys had been appointed for 173 of the 230 buildings.

7.13 Apart from the buildings selected for implementing the four-pronged approach, the FSD has not adopted a risk-based approach in selecting buildings for recruiting Envoys for them. From time to time, organisations interested in joining the Building Fire Safety Envoy Scheme (e.g. property management companies and Owners' Corporations) approach the FSD to arrange training for their nominees. There are also referrals from existing Envoys.

7.14 According to the Home Affairs Department, there were some 3,900 buildings in Hong Kong without Owners' Corporations, residents' organisations or property management companies, and they were 30 years old or above. In Audit's view, following the risk-based approach, the FSD needs to give priority to recruiting Envoys for such buildings so as to enhance their fire safety.

Audit recommendations

7.15 Audit has *recommended* that the Director of Fire Services should:

- (a) take appropriate measures to encourage Building Fire Safety Envoys to participate actively in the fire safety matters of their buildings, particularly in respect of the annual inspections of FSIs; and**
- (b) following the risk-based approach, give priority to recruiting Envoys for old buildings without Owners' Corporations, residents' organisations or property management companies.**

Response from the Administration

7.16 The Director of Fire Services agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

- (a) the Building Fire Safety Envoy Scheme is a voluntary services programme. The Scheme should not be considered as ineffective because among the 20 sample buildings examined by Audit, FSIs in 16 buildings had been properly maintained. Nevertheless, the FSD will take appropriate measures to encourage more active participation of Envoys in fire safety matters of their buildings; and**
- (b) the FSD will adopt a risk-based approach to recruit Envoys for old composite and domestic buildings without Owners' Corporations, residents' organisations or property management companies, with a view to enhancing their fire safety.**

Announcements in the public interest on fire prevention

7.17 Broadcasting APIs on television is an important means for the FSD to disseminate fire safety messages. In the past five years, 14 APIs on fire prevention were broadcast on television, including four APIs on the proper maintenance of FSIs. The broadcasting of two of the four APIs were ceased in February 2011 and January 2012 respectively while the broadcasting of the other two APIs is ongoing.

Audit noted issues concerning the APIs which require the FSD's attention. Details are in paragraphs 7.18 and 7.19.

7.18 ***Statutory requirement not mentioned.*** In the April 2013 matching exercise, the FSD found that 44% of the buildings were not in compliance with the statutory requirement to conduct annual inspections of FSIs (see para. 2.10). In addition, the FSD received about 6,300 public enquiries about the requirement after issuing advisory letters to the building owners, occupiers or management offices concerned. These suggest a need to enhance public awareness in this regard. However, the two ongoing APIs had no mention of the requirement (Note 42).

7.19 ***Broadcasting spots not increased.*** The Information Services Department allocates broadcasting spots to individual APIs taking into account the requests of the bureaux/departments concerned. Audit noted that the FSD had not requested more broadcasting spots for the APIs during the period in which the advisory letters were issued. In Audit's view, the importance of conducting annual inspections of FSIs as mentioned in the letters could have been better understood by the recipients if the FSD had done so.

Audit recommendations

7.20 **Audit has recommended that the Director of Fire Services should:**

- (a) **enhance public awareness of the statutory requirement to conduct annual inspections of FSIs by publicising the requirement in future APIs on fire prevention as appropriate; and**
- (b) **request more broadcasting spots for an API to enhance publicity when conducting any large scale operation on related matters.**

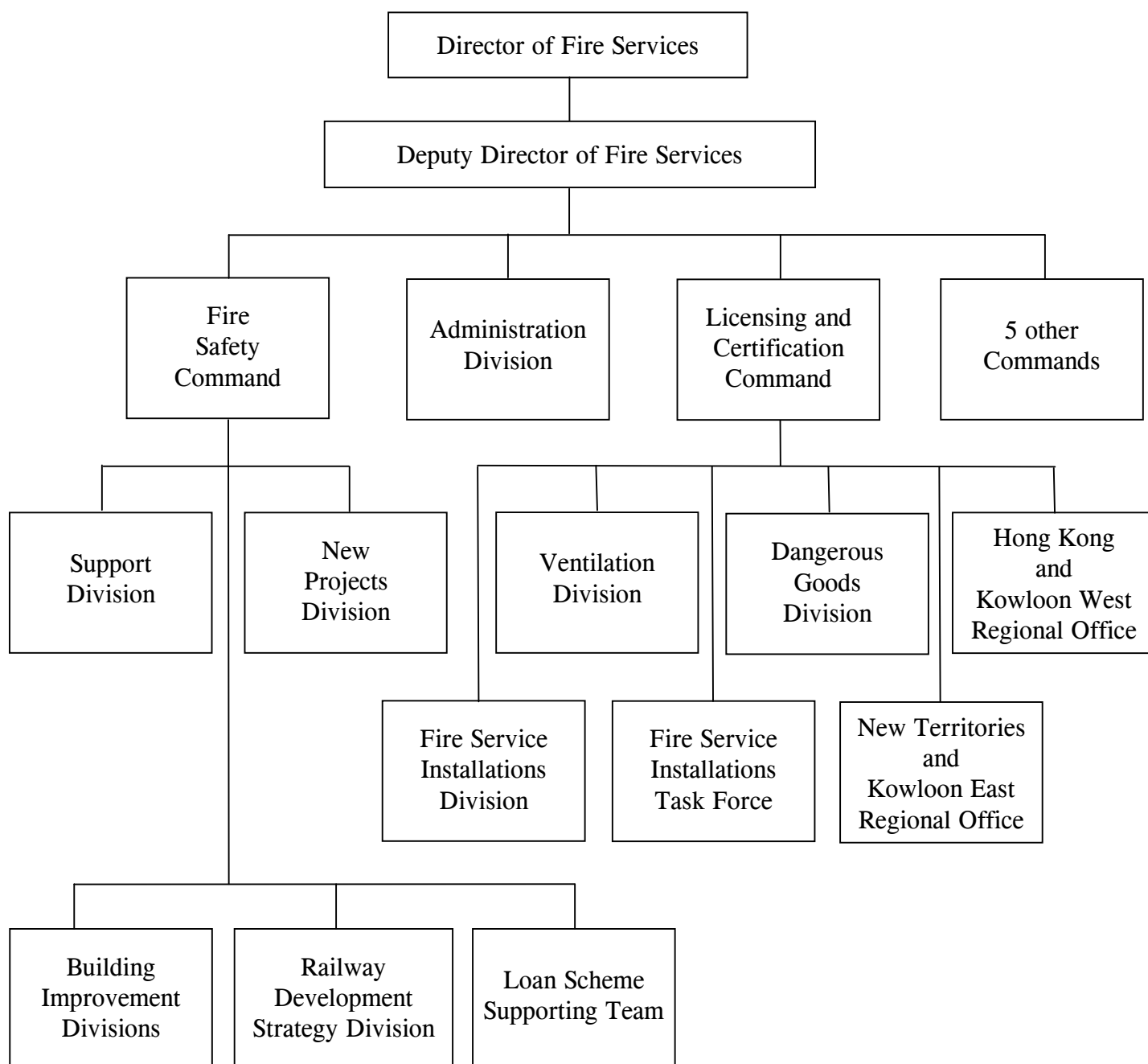
Note 42: *The requirement was mentioned in the API which has ceased to be broadcast since January 2012 (see para. 7.17).*

Response from the Administration

7.21 The Director of Fire Services agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

- (a) APIs regarding annual maintenance of FSIs and ventilating systems were produced and delivered in the past. The FSD will include the statutory requirement to conduct annual inspections of FSIs on APIs as appropriate in future to enhance public awareness of the requirement; and
- (b) the FSD will request the Information Services Department to increase the broadcast spots/frequency of the relevant APIs in future as appropriate.

**Fire Services Department
Organisation chart (extract)
(30 September 2013)**



Source: FSD records

Acronyms and abbreviations

APIs	Announcements in the public interest
Audit	Audit Commission
BD	Buildings Department
FEHD	Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
FHAN	Fire Hazard Abatement Notice
FSD	Fire Services Department
FSIs	Fire service installations and equipment
FS251	Certificate of Fire Service Installations and Equipment
LIFIPS	Integrated Licensing, Fire Safety and Prosecution System