

MEDIA RELEASE

Changes to Building Control Act to enhance safety and improve accessibility in the built environment

Owners of buildings that are more than 13 metres tall will be required to conduct facade inspections every seven years, once the buildings are over 20 years old

Singapore, 6 Mar 2020 – Amendments will be made to the Building Control Act to introduce a new facade inspection regime, enhance the regulatory framework for lifts and escalators, allow the Government to mandate a Progressive Wage Model for Singapore Residents in the lift maintenance industry, and require the provision of basic accessibility features for older buildings that undergo addition and alteration (A&A) works.

These changes are aimed at (i) strengthening the building control regulatory framework in view of Singapore's high-rise built environment and an ageing building stock, and (ii) improving accessibility to meet the needs of an ageing population as well as persons with disabilities. In addition, the amended Building Control Act will consolidate requirements over the entire lifecycle of a building, from design, to construction, to maintenance.

Improving facade safety through a Periodic Facade Inspection (PFI) regime

Under the Building Maintenance and Strata Management Act (BMSMA), responsible parties have a duty to ensure that building exteriors are properly maintained. Going forward, BCA will introduce a new PFI regime to facilitate the early detection of facade deterioration and allow defects to be rectified in a timely manner. This will help to reduce the likelihood of facade failure as our building stock ages. The requirements above will now be consolidated into the Building Control Act.

Facade inspections will need to be conducted every seven years for buildings that are more than 13 metres tall, once they are over 20 years old. Landed houses are exempted from these requirements. Responsible parties must appoint a Competent Person (i.e. Professional Engineer or Registered Architect), who can be assisted by a Facade Inspector (FI), to conduct the facade inspections. The Competent Person will propose appropriate rectification works, if deterioration is detected. These works must be carried out within a specified period.

Given our building stock, we expect more than 4,000 buildings to be inspected each year. BCA will also introduce inspection guidelines and strengthen R&D efforts to look into more effective and productive ways to carry out facade inspections.

Safer Lifts and Escalators (L&E)

BCA currently carries out regular reviews of the regulatory regime for lifts and escalators, in consultation with the industry. In 2016, BCA improved maintenance standards by prescribing the maintenance outcomes to be achieved by lift and escalator contractors.

To strengthen regulatory oversight upstream, BCA will introduce new requirements for the design and installation of lifts and escalators. This will help to reduce the likelihood of deficiencies in design or installation which may give rise to downstream safety incidents.

Owners of lifts and escalators will be required to engage the services of Specialist Professional Engineers (SPE) in lifts and escalators to certify the design plans of lifts and escalators, which are to be submitted to BCA for approval. As part of this new plan submission process, BCA will require lift and escalator professionals to ensure that lift models and their key safety components are certified by independent certification bodies.

Raising Capabilities of Personnel

BCA has already introduced new training courses to raise industry capabilities and skills in preparation for both the PFI regime and the enhanced lift and escalator requirements. In addition, BCA, together with the Association of Consulting Engineers

Singapore (ACES) and The Institution of Engineers, Singapore (IES), will be registering 2 new groups of inspectors -- Facade Inspectors (FIs) and Lift and Escalator Inspectors (LEIs) -- to assist the professionals to carry out their work. FIs and LEIs will be required to fulfil the necessary requirements, before they can be registered. This will ensure that the personnel assisting in the site work are competent and qualified.

More attractive jobs for Singapore Residents in the Lift Industry

A Progressive Wage Model (PWM) for the lift industry was one of the key recommendations from the Lift and Escalator Sectoral Tripartite Committee (STC) in 2018. It will attract more Singapore Residents to join the sector, and ensure that remuneration is commensurate with the job responsibilities and competencies.

The Government accepted the STC's recommendations, and targets to mandate PWM adoption for the lift industry in 2022.

Since May 2019, the Government has taken the lead in supporting the PWM by only awarding lift maintenance tenders to firms that have adopted the PWM. To date, 40 lift maintenance contractors, representing 95% of the market share in Singapore, have committed to adopt the PWM.

Accelerate Accessibility Upgrading for Older Buildings

Since 1990, all new buildings and existing buildings that undergo addition and alteration (A&A) works must meet accessibility requirements. However, these requirements only apply to specific locations in the building where the A&A works are undertaken.

To accelerate accessibility upgrading in older buildings, BCA will require buildings without basic accessibility features to provide these when undertaking A&A works that require plan submissions, regardless of where such works are carried out in the building. These features refer to an accessible building entrance, an accessible route within the entrance level and an accessible toilet. The new requirement will apply to commercial and institutional buildings with Gross Floor Area (GFA) of more than 500m².

Other Amendments

These include enhancements to the builders licensing scheme for clarity in the governance and accountability of responsible parties; enhancing the safety of Mechanised Car Parking Systems (MCPS); and requirements for relevant parties to notify BCA of safety-related defects and incidents relating to lifts, escalators, MCPS or facades.

Implementation

BCA has consulted industry stakeholders in coming up with these amendments and they are supportive of these changes. The industry will be given sufficient notice ahead of the implementation of new requirements, which will take place progressively from the second half of 2021, when the necessary regulations have been put in place.

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