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Safety in buildings

'Ensure that guard rails will not allow a toddler to slip through.'
Mr Tey Chee Meng

My family were near the guard rails at the fifth-level escalator leading up to the Banquet foodcourt and Time Zone in Causeway Point recently. My son, a toddler, was standing before the railings when I noticed the gap between the guard rails looked too wide for comfort. I snatched him away. The gap was about 13cm. At the other end was a five-storey fall. When I checked the Internet, there was at least one report of a death resulting from a slip through the gaps in guard rails. I also found out that tests showed that while a gap of 13cm does not look very wide, it is sufficient for toddlers as old as two years of age to squeeze through. Building owners should ensure that guard rails will not allow a toddler to slip through. Building authorities should require such a safety guarantee.

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Safety-gap specifications for buildings have been revised

I REFER to the concerns raised by Mr Tey Chee Meng in his letter, 'Safety in Buildings' (Jan 28). We agree that safety guard rails or barriers in buildings are to ensure that young children do not fall through.

The maximum gap between railings in safety guard rails in buildings is stipulated in the Building Control Regulations, which are reviewed regularly. Up to the late 1990s, most international building codes had allowed a maximum gap in railings of either 125 mm or 150 mm.

The maximum gap in our building regulations was last revised in 2004 from 150mm to 100mm for new buildings (except for industrial buildings where the presence of children is not expected).

For older buildings, the owners are required to follow the latest standards when they undertake major retrofitting and upgrading works. For other older buildings, including shopping centres such as Causeway Point, the owners had been urged to upgrade and improve their buildings to meet the revised safety standards. The management of Causeway Point has informed us that it has taken immediate measures to improve the safety of the guard rails in the building.

We thank Mr Tey for his feedback.

Reply by Chin Chi Leong
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