

TODAY (Online)

July 5, 2009

Are our buildings safe?

Letter from Sarah Sum-Campbell

In light of the apartment in Shanghai's collapse being blamed on the lax enforcement of rules and regulations, and the use of poor construction methods and low-quality materials, should Singaporeans worry about China-owned and China-managed construction companies here delivering the same quality of work? Can the authorities here assure us there is tight control and supervision over every aspect of work by such companies, so our schools, offices and homes are safe?

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July 11, 2009

Checks, controls ensure safety

BCA takes serious view of non-compliance of rules

Letter from Chew Keat Chuan

**Director, Building Engineering Division,
Building and Construction Authority (BCA)**

WE refer to the letter by Ms Sarah Sum-Campbell, "Are our buildings safe?" (July 5).

We would like to assure readers that the Building and Construction Authority (BCA) places strong emphasis on high safety standards in our built environment.

Under the Building Control Act and Regulations, BCA regulates the design and construction of buildings in Singapore. This includes a rigorous system of checks and controls, from the design stage, the construction process (including the use of materials) to maintenance after completion.

BCA requires a developer or building owner to appoint a Qualified Person, who is a registered professional engineer, to carry out the structural design and submit the structural design and plans for BCA's approval. Depending on the complexity of a project, independent design checks by accredited checkers, who are senior professional engineers, are required for the key structural elements of the building.

During construction, the Qualified Person and his team of resident engineers and resident technical officers will supervise the building works to ensure that the building structure is constructed according to the approved plans. Materials used

for construction must be tested by accredited laboratories to ensure compliance with the prescribed standards.

BCA also conducts random site inspections to check that building regulations are adhered to and all parties carry out their duties as required. We take a serious view of any non-compliance of our building regulations and, where necessary, we will take appropriate enforcement action against parties responsible.

Since October last year, BCA has put in place regulations for the design and supervision of underground building works (such as deep excavation and foundation system for highrise building) where specialist geotechnical professional engineers and accredited checkers have to be appointed.

In addition, BCA has implemented the Licensing of Builders Scheme, where all builders holding permits to carry out construction works and builders who work in specialist areas which have a high impact on public safety need to have a Builder's Licence under the Building Control Act.

Errant builders may have their licence suspended or revoked, and will be barred from carrying out any works. The Building Control Act also requires completed buildings to be inspected periodically by professional engineers. This periodic structural inspection is to check for structural deterioration or defects so that remedial actions can be taken early.

We thank Ms Sum-Campbell for the opportunity to clarify.