

Straits Times Online forum

August 8, 2009

Make regular checks on ceiling fans compulsory

Raymund Koh

I READ with interest last Sunday's report, 'Ceiling fan blade hits diner's ankle', on how a fan blade came off its fixture in Cafe Vic at Carlton Hotel and hurt a diner on the ankle.

While I agree that the hotel staff could have done more and that their handling of the matter was rather unprofessional, my letter is not so much about customer service as it is about fan safety.

Let us take this incident as an opportunity to warn all establishments and schools with ceiling fans not to be complacent about fan maintenance. Although, as quoted by fan specialist Aisha Ng, a fan needs little attention if fixed properly, all establishments that use such fans should do checks and servicing every six months to prevent such incidents. This is especially so in schools where ceiling fans are widely used.

A fan blade or the entire fan when dislodged while spinning can cause severe damage, injuries or even death. This is not a trivial matter as many establishments are accessible to members of the public. What if a child was cut in the face or neck? No amount of compensation would be adequate.

I hope the Building and Construction Authority will take this into account and mandate some form of inspection. This will ensure that fans in public areas are in good working condition and safe.

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Ceiling fans must be properly serviced

Ms Chua Bee Tee

Deputy Director, Special Functions (Enforcement & Structural Inspection)
Building and Construction Authority

We refer to Mr Raymund Koh's letter "Make regular checks on ceiling fans compulsory" (ST Online, 8 August).

The Building and Construction Authority (BCA) regulates building safety by requiring the building structures and key components to be designed and constructed in accordance with the requirements in the Building Control Act and

Regulations. The structures are also required to be inspected periodically, every five years for non-residential buildings and ten years for residential buildings, by professional engineers who are engaged by building owners.

This is to ensure that structural deterioration or defects can be detected and remedial actions taken early; structural alterations have been approved and are properly carried out; and the building is not subject to usage that it is not designed for.

For fittings and fixtures within units in a building – such as ceiling fans, chandeliers and lamps, owners or occupiers should ensure that these are properly installed and regularly checked and repaired, if necessary, so that they do not pose a danger to themselves or their patrons.

We thank Mr Koh for the opportunity to clarify.