

It's *Dangerous* Living in Subdivided Flats in Industrial Buildings



Preface

In the past, "subdivided flats" only existed in domestic and composite buildings. However in recent years, they are also found in industrial buildings. As industrial buildings are not designed for domestic use, the use of units in industrial buildings for domestic purpose, whether it is a subdivided flat or not, will obviously pose higher risk to the inhabitants. To ensure safety of the public, in particular those living in the subdivided flats in industrial buildings, vigorous enforcement action has to be taken by the Buildings Department (BD).

Why Subdivided Flats in Industrial Buildings Are Not Suitable for Domestic Use ?

Subdivided flats in industrial buildings are not suitable for domestic use because industrial buildings are not designed for domestic use and thus are subject to requirements different from those applicable to domestic and composite buildings on various aspects, such as the provision of natural lighting and ventilation, open space, means of escape and other fire safety measures. Furthermore, the inhabitants of dwelling units in an industrial building converted for domestic use could be exposed to high fire risks posed by the other units within the same industrial building which are still being used for industrial activities or storage of dangerous and inflammable



goods. Even if all the other units are vacant at the time the inhabitants moved in, those units could be put back to their originally approved industrial use at any time and domestic use is totally incompatible with industrial use. As such, using an industrial unit for domestic purpose, whether in a subdivided flat or not, will pose a high risk to the inhabitants. Since the potential risks cannot be rectified solely by remedial or improvement works, subdivided flats within industrial buildings are absolutely not suitable for domestic use.

Buildings Department Endeavours to Eradicate Unauthorised Subdivided Domestic Flats in Industrial Buildings

In view of the high fire risk to the inhabitants living in subdivided flats in industrial buildings, it is necessary for the BD to take vigorous enforcement action to ensure the safety of the inhabitants. Starting from 2012, the BD has stepped up enforcement action against subdivided domestic flats in industrial buildings by extending the scope of target buildings of the large scale operation against subdivided flats to cover industrial buildings.

Depending on the nature of the irregularities, the BD will issue statutory orders under section 25(2)(b) and section 24(1) of the Buildings Ordinance (BO) respectively to require discontinuation of domestic use of the industrial building and the removal of the related unauthorised building works. If the owner fails to comply with the order upon expiry thereof, the BD will consider instigating prosecution against the owner. In accordance with the BO, the BD may also arrange the Government Contractor to carry out the required works and then recover the cost of the works plus supervision charge and a surcharge from the owner.

For those who are living in subdivided flats in industrial buildings and have to move out as a result of BD's enforcement action, measures have been put in place to provide financial assistance to them and help them to seek proper accommodation. BD has also established social services teams to provide the necessary social and emotional support to affected occupants.

Reports on Unauthorised Subdivided Domestic Flats in Industrial Buildings

To ensure the safety of the public and the inhabitants, any person who suspects or finds out that there are units in an industrial building being converted for domestic use may report the situation to the Buildings Department through:

Telephone Hotline: 2626 1616 (Handled by "1823")

Postal address: G/F, Buildings Department Headquarters, North Tower, West Kowloon Government Offices, 11 Hoi Ting Road, Yau Ma Tei, Kowloon

Email address: enquiry@bd.gov.hk

Electronic Reporting Form: <https://www.bd.gov.hk/en/about-us/contact-us/index.html>