



**SINGAPORE CIVIL DEFENCE FORCE  
MEDIA BRIEFING – FIRE AND AMBULANCE STATISTICS FOR 2008**

**TOPIC 1**

**FIRE INCIDENT STATISTICS  
(JAN – DEC 2008)**

**RUBBISH FIRES DRIVING UP FIRE CALLS**

1. The number of fire incidents last year remains fairly constant at 4973 cases compared to 4796 cases in 2007. Although of these, 4011 cases (or 81%) involved building structures, more than half (ie. 2166 cases or 54%) were rubbish fires at residential premises.

2. In fact 2008 recorded the highest number of rubbish fires in residential estates since 1999 which registered 2,302 cases. Apart from driving up the number of fire calls last year, this high percentage of rubbish fires also places unnecessary strain on emergency resources. The total number of fires in Singapore over the years peaked at 6,705 cases in 1997.

<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>Jan-Dec 2007</b>	<b>Jan-Dec 2008</b>	<b>Absolute Change</b>	<b>% Change</b>
Rubbish Chute Fires	1199	1,271	72	6%
Rubbish Bin Fires	277	428	151	55%
Discarded Items Fires (at common spaces)	493	467	-26	-5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1969</b>	<b>2166</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>10%</b>

**Table 1: Rubbish fires at residential premises**

3. Rubbish fires comprise fires involving rubbish chutes, rubbish bins and discarded items at common spaces such as corridors, lift lobbies, staircases and void decks. See **Table 1**. Of the 3 types of rubbish fires, discarded items at common spaces in buildings (such as corridors, lift lobbies, staircases and void

decks) are of greater concern. Despite its fall of about 5% (26 cases) from 493 cases to 467 cases in 2008, discarded items fires at common spaces in buildings has the potential to be more serious in nature due to the high fire load present. Such fires along corridors in particular can also hinder the smooth evacuation of occupants.

4. To prevent fires at common spaces, residents should make it a point not to leave unwanted household items or storages outside their homes. Instead, these items should be properly disposed off. Town Councils do provide bulky refuse removal service to their residents.

5. To prevent fires in rubbish chutes and rubbish bins, residents should refrain from indiscriminately disposing lighted materials such as cigarette butts, match sticks and embers into them. While the damage from such fires is confined to only within the rubbish chute enclosure, the smoke entering residential units can cause annoyance to residents and undue alarm.

### **SPREADING THE FIRE SAFETY MESSAGE**

6. To help raise fire safety awareness, SCDF has recently collaborated with the National Fire and Civil Emergency Preparedness Council (NFEC) to launch an on-line quiz and to produce more than 300 fire safety banners for display in the heartlands. The quiz is based on contents found in the Civil Defence Emergency Handbook (see **Annex A**) while the banners highlight the main causes of fires at residential premises, namely rubbish chute fires, unattended cooking fires, and discarded items fires. See **Annex B**.

### **NUMBER OF FIRES AT PUBLIC PREMISES STATUS QUO**

7. The number of fire outbreaks at public building premises last year remains largely unchanged. See **Table 2**. In fact, commercial premises fires slipped by 2 cases to 317 last year. Fires at industrial and social/communal premises inched by a few percentage points (between 1% and 4%) to 158 and 151 cases respectively. Owners and Management of buildings should continue to ensure that all measures are taken to prevent fires in such premises at all times as such buildings are normally occupied by many people. Any fire outbreaks would likely expose more people to the incident and affect business operations.

DESCRIPTION	Jan-Dec 2007	Jan-Dec 2008	Absolute Change	% Change
Commercial Premises Fires	319	317	-2	-1%
Industrial Premises Fires	152	158	6	4%
Social/Communal Premises Fires	150	151	1	1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>621</b>	<b>626</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1%</b>

**Table 2: Fire calls at non-residential premises**

**INDISCRIMINATE DISPOSAL OF LIGHTED MATERIALS MAIN CAUSE OF FIRES**

8. “Dropped light” last year led to 3071 cases of fire outbreaks registering a 9% (244 cases) increase over 2007 which recorded 2827 cases. It contributed to 62% of the total fire outbreaks in Singapore last year. “Dropped light” includes not properly extinguished cigarette butts, embers from charcoal, lit incense sticks and match sticks.

**FIRE CASUALTIES**

9. The number of persons who sustained injuries at fires last year increased from 96 to 122. See **Table 3**. This can be attributed to the following incidents which led to between 6 and 13 casualties each:

a. Kitchen fire on the second floor of a dormitory block at Kaki Bukit Ave 4 on 8 Jan 2008. The incident resulted in 8 victims who sustained burn injuries. The fire was extinguished by building occupants with fire extinguishers.

b. Fire on board a vessel (Rainbow Star) berthed at Kreuz Shipyard (23 Tuas Crescent) on 8 Jun 2008. The incident led to 13 casualties – 7 suffered burn injuries and 6 smoke inhalation. SCDF put out the fire with 4 jets within 25 minutes. 3 fire engines, 4 ambulances and 7 support appliances were deployed for the incident.

c. LPG fire at the cooking area of a wedding banquet in Upper Boon Keng on 30 Nov 08. 6 persons were treated for burn injuries. The fire was extinguished by SCDF with watermist guns and dry powder extinguishers. 2 fire engines and 2 ambulances were deployed for the incident.

DESCRIPTION	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Number of fire injuries	131	111	91	96	122
Number of fire fatalities	7	1	3	4	0

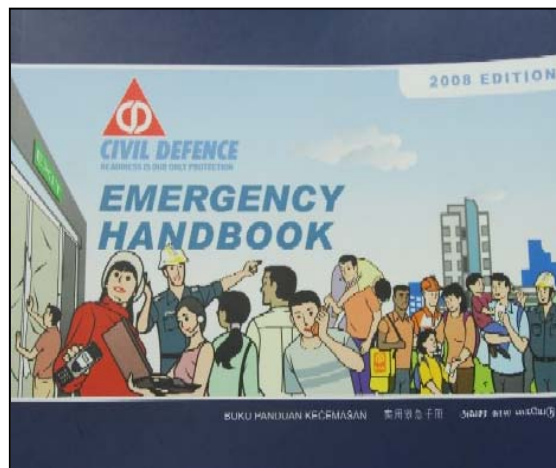
**Table 3: Fire casualties from 2004 to 2008**

10. There was no fire fatality last year. The last time this occurred was in 2002. **Table 3** shows the number of fire fatalities over the last 5 years. Tips to escape fire outbreaks can be found in the SCDF Emergency Handbook, <http://www.nfec.gov.sg>, and <http://www.scdf.gov.sg>.

**ON-LINE CIVIL DEFENCE EMERGENCY HANDBOOK QUIZ**

SCDF launched an on-line quiz on the Civil Defence Emergency Handbook in January 2009. This quiz comprises 8 multiple choice questions relating to the topics found in this latest edition of the handbook. 50 participants submitting the correct entries selected at random will receive a prize of \$100 sponsored by the National Fire and Civil Emergency Preparedness Council (NFEC). This online quiz not only serves to reinforce learning and encourage knowledge retention of the public, but also serves as an incentive for more members of the public to start reading the book. Public are encouraged to take part in the online quiz by logging on to the SCDF website at <http://www.scdf.gov.sg>. The online quiz will end on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2009.

The CD Emergency Handbook (6<sup>th</sup> Edition) was launched on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2008. It incorporates updated and revised contents and contains reader-friendly pictorial texts which serve as constructive tools in enhancing civil defence awareness amongst the population.



SCDF worked closely with the People's Association and the grassroots organizations to distribute the handbooks to nearly 1 million households. This joint public education drive was completed in mid-January 2009.

**“HELP PREVENT FIRES” BANNER TO HIT THE STREETS**

In collaboration with the National Fire and Civil Emergency Preparedness Council (NFEC), SCDF has produced a fire-safety banner to help residents identify potential fire hazards in their homes. The banner focuses on the 3 main causes of fires in residential premises, namely rubbish chute fires, unattended cooking, and fires involving combustibles discarded along the common spaces (corridors, lifts lobbies, staircases and void decks).

In total, 320 banners will be displayed at prominent locations within the housing estates. These banners will be available from February 2009. It is hoped that the banners will help not only raise the level of awareness, but also impress upon the public on the need to take fire safety seriously at all times.

