

**Independent Committee in relation to the
Fire at Wang Fuk Court in Tai Po**

**WITNESS STATEMENT OF
YUE CHAK SANG**

I, Yue Chak Sang, Assistant Director/ New Buildings 1 of the Buildings Department (“**BD**”), 9/F, 14 Taikoo Wan Road, Taikoo Shing, Hong Kong, do say as follows:-

1. I am the Assistant Director/ New Buildings 1 of the BD of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. I am also a registered architect and an authorized person under section 3 of the Buildings Ordinance (“**BO**”). I have joined the BD for 29 years since 1997 and was promoted to the present rank on 13 April 2025. My main responsibilities include overseeing the New Buildings Division 1 of the BD which scrutinises and approves building plans, carries out audit checks on construction works and site safety, and issues occupation permits upon completion of new buildings.

2. I make this Witness Statement pursuant to the request of the Independent Committee (the “**Committee**”) in relation to the fire at Wang Fuk Court (“**WFC**”) in Tai Po as set out in a letter from Messrs. Lo & Lo, Solicitors for the Committee, to the Director of Buildings dated 5 January 2026 (the “**Letter**”) in which specific questions were raised in paragraphs 1-57 (“**Paragraphs**”). Save where otherwise appears, the facts deposed hereto are within my personal knowledge or are derived from office files and records and sources to which I have access and which are true to the best of my knowledge, information and belief. Save as otherwise

specified, this Witness Statement adopts the same abbreviations and nomenclature as in the Letter.

3. In this Witness Statement, I shall address Paragraphs 37-53 of the Letter. Other paragraphs which are within the BD's purview will be addressed in the witness statements of other relevant officers of BD to the Committee.
4. I understand that BD will produce to the Committee a List of Documents ("LoD"), a draft of which I have read, indexing all relevant documents in the BD's possession. In this Witness Statement, I shall refer to these documents by their designation in the LoD (for example, [BD/A/1] means Item 1 in Part A of the LoD) without annexing them hereto for the avoidance of duplication.
5. This Witness Statement is divided into the following parts:-
 - (1) **Part I** provides a detailed description of BD's roles and responsibilities in administering the standards for building materials in answer to Paragraphs 37-50; and
 - (2) **Part II** describes building plans, drawings and designs of WFC in relation to renovation works in answer to Paragraphs 51-53.

Part I – BD's Roles and Responsibilities in Administering the Standards for Building Materials

Paragraphs 37 & 39: Governing the use of building materials

Performance requirements for building materials used in building works

6. In general, building materials including those used in new building

construction and repair works are governed by the requirements stipulated in the Building (Construction) Regulation (Cap.123Q) (“**B(C)R**”) [BD/A/72]. Under section 3 of the B(C)R, all materials used in building works must be of a nature and quality suitable for their intended use or purpose; adequately mixed or prepared; and applied, used or fixed so as to perform adequately their intended functions. The materials used must be adequately tested.

7. To ensure compliance with the performance requirements under the B(C)R, BD:-

- (a) issues various Codes of Practice (“**CoPs**”) ¹ in respect of structural design and building materials commonly used in building construction covering e.g. concrete, glass and steel;
- (b) provides the deemed-to-comply provisions² on fire resisting construction and fire properties of building elements and components in Parts C and E of the Code of Practice for Fire Safety in Buildings 2011 (2024 Edition) (“**FS Code**”) [BD/A/50] respectively for complying with the relevant requirements of B(C)R; and
- (c) issues technical guidelines, practice notes and circular letters to provide standards and technical criteria accepted by the

¹ Include -

- (a) Code of Practice for Dead and Imposed Loads 2011 (2021 Edition) (see [BD/A/49A]);
- (b) Code of Practice for Foundations 2017 (2024 Edition) and subsequent amendment in 2025(see [BD/A/66B]);
- (c) Code of Practice for Precast Concrete Construction 2016 and subsequent amendment in 2020; (see [BD/A/66A])
- (d) Code of Practice for Structural Use of Concrete 2013 (2020 Edition) and subsequent amendments in 2022, 2023 and 2024(see [BD/A/17A]);
- (e) Code of Practice for Structural Use of Glass 2018 and subsequent amendments in 2020 and 2024(see [BD/A/67A]);
- (f) Code of Practice for the Structural Use of Steel 2011 (2023 Edition) (see [BD/A/50A]); and
- (g) Code of Practice on Wind Effects in Hong Kong 2019 and subsequent amendment in 2023 (see [BD/A/14A]).

² i.e. compliance with the prescriptive requirements under the FS Code shall be considered as satisfying the performance-based requirements under the B(C)R.

Building Authority (“BA”) as compliant with the performance requirements stipulated in the B(C)R. For instance, Practice Note for Authorized Persons, Registered Structural Engineers and Registered Geotechnical Engineers (“PNAP”) APP-53 [BD/A/18] provides a list of standards and technical criteria accepted by the BA.

8. The key control features under the BO to safeguard usage of conforming building materials are elaborated in the ensuring paragraphs:-
- (a) Imposing on PBPs and RCs the obligations of ensuring usage of conforming building materials under the BO (paragraphs 9 & 14);
 - (b) mandating the usage of conforming major building materials to be presented on the plans submitted to the BA to facilitate prosecution in case of non-compliance amongst other things (paragraphs 10-11);
 - (c) imposing testing requirements for major building materials (paragraphs 12-13);
 - (d) requiring PBPs and RCs’ certifying works completion to include use of conforming major building materials to facilitate prosecution in case of non-compliance amongst other things (paragraphs 15-16); and
 - (e) complementing PBPs and RCs’ statutory obligations with BD’s audit checks to increase deterrence (paragraphs 17-23).

It should be noted that for construction sites, be they for new buildings or major repairs, many types of building materials are involved. For the regulatory regime to be effective, our regulation has been focussing on major building materials, i.e. those involving structural elements and fire resisting functions such as concrete, structural steel, fire-rated doors, etc.

9. For all materials used in building works, including works requiring approval of plans and consent for commencement of works by the BA, and minor works which require no approval of plans and consent for commencement of works by the BA, prescribed building professionals (“**PBPs**”) and registered contractors (“**RCs**”) are obliged to comply with the requirements of the BO and its subsidiary regulations, notably the B(C)R such that conforming materials are used in the works.
10. For repair works involving building works that require approval of plans and consent for commencement of works by the BA (e.g. reconstruction of seriously defective structural members not in accordance with original design and/ or strengthening works), the major building materials (e.g. structural steel, steel reinforcement and concrete) meeting the required standards should be specified in the plans submitted to the BA for approval.
11. For repair works involving only minor works including prescribed repair works under the Mandatory Building Inspection Scheme (“**MBIS**”), the major building materials (e.g. concrete repair materials) meeting the required standards should be shown on the prescribed plans prepared by the PBPs or RCs which will be submitted to the BA for record³. No approval of such plans and consent for commencement of works are required under the BO.
12. For projects requiring approval of plans and consent for commencement of works by the BA, major materials used in building works would require the submission of certificates and/or testing reports to BD upon completion of building works in accordance with recognised standards as set out in the B(C)R,

³ See audit checks in paragraphs 21-23.

CoPs and/ or conditions and requirements imposed on the projects when granting the approval and consent by the BA under Regulation 10 of Building (Administration) Regulations (Cap.123A) (“**B(A)R**”) and item 6 of section 17(1) of the BO.

13. For minor works including prescribed repair works under MBIS, tests would be required to be conducted in accordance with the Technical Guidelines on Minor Works Control System (2024 edition) (“**TG for MW**”) and Code of Practice for the Mandatory Building Inspection Scheme and the Mandatory Window Inspection Scheme (2023 Edition) (“**CoP for MBIS**”) as applicable to the works (e.g. pull-off test for external rendering/ tiles/ concrete repair as required under Clause 5.3.1 and Appendix IV and compressive test of concrete test cubes as required under Appendix V of the CoP for MBIS, and drain test for underground drains as required under Clause 3.3.2 of the TG for MW). Such test reports and certificates (e.g. fire rating certificate of fire rated doors) are required to be submitted to BD upon completion of works to ensure the standard and quality of the works in accordance with the BO. A copy of the TG for MW and CoP for MBIS and is at [**BD/A/44**] and [**BD/A/54**] and respectively.
14. Under the BO, PBPs and RCs have responsibilities to supervise building works including the use of conforming building materials and certifying compliance with relevant provisions of the BO upon completion of works. As regards the related verification and testing of materials, PBPs and RCs are required under section 3(2) of the B(C)R to use materials that are adequately tested by recognised tests. It is the responsibility of PBPs and RCs to engage independent accredited laboratories for compliance with standards and for certification.
15. For building works requiring approval and consent by the BA,

PBPs should confirm and certify upon completion of works that the building materials and products used are in compliance with the relevant provisions of the BO and its subsidiary regulations, while the RCs should confirm the use of those building materials and products in construction upon application for an occupation permit following completion of building works. For instance, samples of concrete and steel should be sent to an independent accredited laboratory⁴ for testing. The test results should be submitted to BD with certification that the test was conducted in accordance with the recognised standards. The relevant requirements are also set out in PNAP APP-13 [BD/A/16A]/PNRC 25 [BD/A/18A] and APP-118 [BD/A/32]/PNRC 48 [BD/A/33].

16. For prescribed repair works under MBIS and Mandatory Window Inspection Scheme (“MWIS”), the Registered Inspectors (“RIs”) supervising the repair works are required to certify the completion of the prescribed repair works to the BA that the works have been carried out in accordance with the BO; and submit a completion report including any record of repair works carried out, report or certificate of materials used, statement of the methods of testing adopted (e.g. drain test for underground drains as required under Clause 5.6.5 of CoP for MBIS, pull-off test for external rendering/tiles/ concrete repair as required under Clause 5.3.1 and Appendix IV and compressive test of concrete test cubes as required under Appendix V of the CoP for MBIS) for the prescribed repair and record of the result of the testing conducted.
17. BD undertakes surprise audit inspections to building works to verify that the works and materials utilised conform to the

⁴ The BA will recognise those laboratories accredited by the Hong Kong Laboratory Accreditation Scheme (“HOKLAS”) or by other laboratory accreditation bodies which have reached mutual recognition arrangements with HOKLAS.

requirements of the BO, its regulations and the related standards outlined in the approved plans, relevant CoPs and imposed conditions. During the past three years, BD conducted the following inspections to audit the safety and quality of building works for new buildings, A&A and demolition requiring the BA's prior approval and consent:

	Total number of sites	No. of sites inspected	No. of inspections made
2023	1 964	1 290	12 910
2024	1 748	1 327	12 591
2025	1 735	1 241	11 941

18. During these site audit checks, BD officers examine the quality and compliance of materials against the standards set forth by the B(C)R, relevant CoPs and practice notes. The audit procedures comprise checking documents including inspecting log books of site supervisory personnels provided by RCs and APs/ RSEs, reviewing material certifications and test reports, witnessing on-site tests and assessing on-site conditions to ensure adherence to safety and quality standards.
19. Upon completion of building works, apart from conducting site inspections to audit the completed works in compliance with the approved plans and the BO, BD conducts completeness check and accuracy check on test reports and certificates pertaining to the materials used. This is to check and ensure that all materials comply with the performance requirements and standards. The documents must demonstrate that the materials meet the requirements and standards.
20. If the requirements and standards are not complied with or no test reports are submitted, BD will not acknowledge completion of the

works and/or issue the Occupation Permit.

21. For repair works under MBIS and MWIS, the RIs and RCs shall supervise the repair works to ensure that the works are prepared, carried out and completed safely and up to the required standards, and that the building has been rendered safe after completion of the repair works. BD carries out random audit checks upon the RIs' submissions are received to ensure quality of rectification and repair works fulfill the requirements stipulated in the BO and regulations. Details of the audit checks under MBIS are covered in the witness statement of Ms Cheung Yuk Ching, Karen, AD/MBI.
22. For non-MBIS/MWIS minor works ("MW"), they are regulated under the Minor Works Control System ("MWCS")⁵. Audit check of MW comprises desktop study of the submitted documents and site audit check. Details of the audit checks for MW are covered in the witness statement of Mr Pang Yuk Lung, Michael, AD/CS.
23. If irregularities are found during audit check, BD would demand rectification, carry out investigation for considering if mal-practice of the PBPs and RCs or any contraventions of the BO are established, and issue removal order under sections 24 or 24AA of the BO against the contravention as necessary. Prosecution and/or disciplinary actions will be instigated according to evidence and circumstances of the case.
24. In light of the WFC fire, the Development Bureau ("DEVB") and BD acknowledge that there is room for improvement. Apart from putting in place a new arrangement around mid-December to

⁵ For less complex and lower risk building works, the simplified procedures of the MWCS would apply. MWCS aims at facilitating owners in carrying out small-scale building works safely and lawfully.

sample and test protective nets, we are also proposing to further amend the BO to step up regulation of major building repairs works including use of conforming materials, arranging resources to enhance audit checks in terms of frequency and extend of checking to increase deterrence, etc. Paragraphs 38, 55, 56 and 75 below are relevant.

Scaffolding works and protective nets

25. Scaffold is not defined under the BO. On the other hand, under regulation 2 of the Construction Sites (Safety) Regulations (Cap. 591) (“CSSRs”) administered and enforced by the Labour Department (“LD”), “scaffold” means any temporarily provided structure on or from which persons perform work in connexion with operations or works to which these regulations apply, and any temporarily provided structure which enables persons to obtain access to or which enables materials to be taken to any place at which such work is performed, and includes any working platform, gangway, run, ladder or step-ladder (other than an independent ladder or step-ladder which does not form part of such a structure) together with any guard-rail, toe-board or other safeguards and all fixings, but does not include a lifting appliance or a structure used merely to support such an appliance or to support other plant or equipment.
26. According to regulation 38B(4) of CSSRs, every working platform, guard-rail, barrier, toe-board, fence, covering for an opening, gangway or run provide for the purpose of this regulation shall comply with the provisions of the Third Schedule of the CSSRs applicable to it. Requirements (e.g. working platform, gangway or run shall be of sound construction, adequate strength and free from patent defect) are provided in the Third Schedule of CSSRs.

27. While the erection of scaffolds to facilitate construction and repair works falls within the meaning of “building works” under section 2(1) of the BO, scaffolds are currently not required to be shown on prescribed plans under regulation 8 of the B(A)R. No approval of plans and consent for commencement of works by the BA are required for erection of scaffolds for new building construction as well as repair works to existing buildings.
28. Under BD’s regulatory regime, the scaffolds and protective nets on scaffolds are precautionary measures that would be implemented when carrying out building works. Protective nets on scaffolding are used to retain accidental falling of materials (like debris) to protect the public and workers below, while also allow light and air to pass through, and enhance site safety. According to section 16 of the B(C)R, appropriate construction methods and procedures must be adopted; and appropriate precautionary measures must be taken in carrying out building works.
29. BD has provided guidelines to PBPs, RCs and other practitioners through CoPs, practice notes, guidelines and circular letters with a view to ensuring safety on the design and construction of scaffolds and scaffold nets. These publications include:-
- (a) FS Code;
 - (b) Code of Practice for Demolition of Buildings 2004 and the subsequent amendments in 2016 and 2023 (“**Demolition Code**”) [BD/A/36];
 - (c) Code of Practice for Site Supervision 2009 (2024 Edition) [BD/A/45];
 - (d) CoP for MBIS (2023 Edition);
 - (e) PNAP APP-23 on Hoardings, Covered Walkways and Gantries

- (including Temporary Access for Construction Traffic) - Building (Planning) Regulations Part IX **[BD/A/17]**;
- (f) PNAP APP-70 on “Use of Plastic Sheet to Cover Scaffolding outside Buildings” **[BD/A/19]**;
- (g) Practice Notes for Registered Contractors (“PNRC”) 26 on “Use of Plastic Sheet to Cover Scaffolding outside Buildings” **[BD/A/20]**;
- (h) PNRC 85 on “Fire Retardant Performance of Protective Nets, Screens, Tarpaulin and Plastic Sheeting Installed on Scaffolding of External Walls” **[BD/A/84]**;
- (i) Guidelines on the Design and Construction of Bamboo Scaffolds **[BD/A/38]**;
- (j) TG for MW (2024 edition) and the subsequent amendments in 2025;
- (k) Circular letter to PBPs and RCs on “Use of Fire Retardant Protective Net/Screen/Tarpaulin/Plastic Sheeting on Façade of Buildings under Construction, Demolition, Repair or Minor Works” dated 21.3.2023 **[BD/A/75]**;
- (l) Circular letter to PBPs and RCs on “Use of Fire Retardant Protective Net/Screen/Tarpaulin/Plastic Sheeting on Façade of Buildings under Construction, Demolition, Repair or Minor Works” dated 21.10.2025 **[BD/A/81]**; and
- (m) Circular letters to PBPs and RCs on “Use Fire Retardant Protective Net/Screen/Tarpaulin/Plastic Sheeting on Façade of Buildings under Construction, Demolition, Alteration and Addition, Repair or Minor Works” dated 27.11.2025 **[BD/A/82]** and **[BD/A/83]**.
30. Items (a), (b), (e) to (m) in paragraph 29 above have specifically stipulated that protective net/ screen/ tarpaulin/ plastic sheeting (protective materials) at scaffolding should possess fire retardant property meeting the recognised standards, whilst items (h), (j) and (k) also stipulate that Guobiao Standards GB 5725-2009-Safety

nets, British Standard BS 5867-2-2008, and American Standard NFPA 701: 2009 are acceptable recognised fire retardant standards for protective materials used on scaffolds. Other standards of equivalent fire retardant performance as per the above recognised standards may also be used.

31. The Code of Practice for Bamboo Scaffolding Safety is issued by LD. Paragraph 4.4.4(d) of the Code states:-

“Provision of catch-fan and protective screen

(d) On the face of the scaffold, suitable protective screen (such as nylon nets, plastic sheeting, canvas, etc.) should be provided to confine falling objects. Protective net, screen, tarpaulin/plastic sheeting installed on the face of the scaffold should have appropriate fire retardant properties in compliance with a recognised standard. Examples of recognised standards are listed below for reference:

- (i) GB 5725-2009 - Safety nets;
- (ii) BS 5867-2:2008 - Fabrics for curtains, drapes and window blinds - Part 2: Flammability requirements - Specification; and
- (iii) NFPA 701:2019 - Standard methods of fire tests for flame propagation of textiles and films.

Other standards of equivalent fire retardant performance as per the above recognised standards may also be used.”

32. The recognised standards of fire retardant performance for protective materials stipulated in LD’s Code of Practice for Bamboo Scaffolding Safety are the same as that stipulated in the BD’s publications in items (h), (j) and (k) in paragraph 29 above.

33. Bamboo scaffolds have a long customary background in Hong Kong. Scaffolds and protective nets are erected and installed in an exposed and open environment for temporary purpose. Bamboo scaffolds are allowed for use in both private and public building or repair works.
34. The fire retardant property of protective net which is installed on temporary scaffolds in an exposed and open environment is intended to impede the spread of fire when a fire occurs through increasing the time it takes to ignite and reducing flame spread. The three recognised standards, namely, Guobiao Standards GB 5725-2009-Safety nets, British Standard BS 5867-2-2008 and American Standard NFPA 701: 2009 were adopted based on studies of practice in Chinese Mainland as well as two other overseas jurisdictions, namely the United Kingdom and the United State. These international standards including Guobiao are considered appropriate and do not impose undue hardship on the industry as protective materials meeting these recognised fire retardant requirements can be sourced locally with no major difficulties. Nevertheless, BD will continue to keep in view of any new products and practices from other jurisdictions to facilitate periodic reviews of the standards in consultation with the stakeholders.
35. PBPs and RCs are required to ensure that protective materials meeting the required fire retardant standards are used in building works under sections 3 and 16 of the B(C)R. Generally speaking, with a view to discharging their responsibilities under paragraph 14 above, PBPs/RCs shall ascertain if the materials used are in compliance with the required standards by:-
- (a) obtaining certificates/ testing reports by accredited laboratory

from manufacturers/ suppliers and sending samples for testing by an accredited laboratory as necessary. The detailed requirements are stipulated in PNAP APP-118/ PNRC 48; or

(b) after 19 December 2025, following the procedures as set out in the new PNRC 85 on “Fire Retardant Performance of Protective Nets, Screens, Tarpaulin and Plastic Sheeting Installed on Scaffolding of External Walls” that scaffolding protective materials for external walls are required to be sampled and tested by accredited laboratories.

Offences

36. Under section 40(2A) of the BO, any person for whom building works are being carried out and any PBPs or RCs directly concerned with any such works who permits or authorises to be incorporated in or used in the carrying out of any such inspection or works any materials which are defective or do not comply with the provisions of the BO; or knowingly misrepresents a material fact in any plan, certificate, form, report, notice or other document given to the BA under the BO, shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine of \$1,000,000 and to imprisonment for three years; or in the case of MWs, to a fine of \$500,000 and to imprisonment for 18 months.
37. Under section 40(2B) of the BO, any person directly concerned with building works who—carries out or has carried out building works, or authorises or permits or has authorised or permitted such works to be carried out, in such manner as is likely to cause a risk of injury to any person or damage to any property, shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction — to a fine of \$1,000,000 and to imprisonment for three years; or in the case of MWs, to a fine of \$500,000 and to imprisonment for 18 months.

38. As mentioned in paragraph 24 above, DEVB and BD are considering further amendments to the BO to strengthen regulation of major building repair works. Insofar as measures to step up public safety are concerned, we will empower BD to specify requirements over construction methods and procedures, clearly stipulate what constitutes “appropriate precautionary measures must be taken” under current legislation (see section 16 of the B(C)R), and include fire safety requirements of precautionary measures so as to provide a clearer legal basis for making non-compliance with such standards a new offence and facilitate direct prosecution.

Paragraphs 38 & 40: PNRC 85 and other follow-up actions

Enhanced audit and circulars letters to all PBPs and RCs requiring checking of fire retardance of protective materials in compliance with recognised standard before the WFC fire

39. BD has been conducting surprise site audit checks on new development, A&A and demolition sites in respect of safety and quality of building works carrying out on sites. As regards the site safety inspection, compliance with supervision plans, any irregularities found on adjacent buildings/ structures due to the building works actively in progress and conditions of site activities, etc. will be checked. Since Q3 2024, BD has included the checking of test reports/ certificates of the fire-retardant properties of tarpaulin complying with the three recognised standards and whether the test reports/ certificates are kept on site during site safety inspections of demolition sites for compliance with the Demolition Code.
40. After the Chinachem Tower fire incident on 18 October 2025, BD has extended the checking of test reports/ certificates of the fire-

retardant properties of protective materials during site safety inspections to demolition, new development as well as A&A sites. If the RCs could not provide the relevant test reports/ certificates upon request, BD may issue cease works order.

41. BD issued a circular letter on 21 October 2025 to all PBPs and RCs (i.e. item (l) of paragraph 29 above) requiring them to take immediate action to inspect and ascertain the fire-retardant property of the protective materials on the façade of buildings with building works under their charge. The circular letter also stated that if it is discovered that building works being carried out involve the use of protective materials with inadequate fire retardant properties, BD will take appropriate actions against the relevant persons and contractors under the BO, including consideration of instigating prosecution and disciplinary actions.
42. In parallel, following on the issuance of the said circular letter, BD also enhanced audit check of minor works. If scaffolding is found during site audit check, the RCs would be required to provide the relevant certificates, test reports or assessment reports showing that the protective materials are meeting the recognised standards on fire retardant properties.

After the WFC fire

- (i) *Circular letters to all PBPs and RCs requiring review and report of fire retardant performance of protective materials*
43. On 27 November 2025, BD issued a circular letter to all RCs (i.e. item (m) of paragraph 29 above) urging them to immediately review the fire-retardant properties of the protective materials used for covering the scaffolding at the external walls of buildings (including any sites under construction, demolition, A&A, repair

and minor works). They were required to submit on or before 4 December 2025 the relevant certificates, test reports or assessment reports to BD, certifying that the aforementioned materials are in compliance with the recognised standards of fire retardant properties.

44. Another circular letter was issued on the same day to PBPs (i.e. item (m) of paragraph 29), reminding them to take prompt actions to ensure that the protective materials of their projects possess appropriate fire retardant properties, and to urge their RCs to report so in response to the above-mentioned circular letter to the RCs. Both PBPs and RCs were reminded of their duties and responsibilities under the BO to ensure that the building works carried out by them were in compliance with the provisions of the BO, and that BD would take appropriate action against any contraventions/ non-conformities in accordance with the BO.

45. Following the issuance of circular letters of 27 November 2025, as at 9 January 2026, BD has received over 1 400 submissions. BD is scrutinising the submissions with an aim to identifying any counterfeit test reports and certificates, and would refer any suspected fraudulent cases to the Police for investigation. For cases where BD suspects that the materials do not meet the recognised fire-retardant standards, BD will collect samples of the materials and conduct laboratory tests to ensure safety and compliance.
 - (ii) *Issuance of Cease Works Orders (“CWOs”) for other sites involving the same contractor of WFC & two sites identified with the use plastic boards/ sheets*

46. As informed by the Independent Checking Unit (“ICU”), whom is exercising building control under the BO in respect of WFC,

Prestige Construction & Engineering Co., Limited (“PC&E”) was the contractor engaged by the Owners’ Corporation of WFC to carry out the building repair works. The fire incident at WFC has exposed serious deficiencies of PC&E in site safety management, including the extensive use of foam boards to cover windows, suspected use of protective nets not meeting the recognised fire retardant standards, and making opening at exit staircase windows for delivery of materials and access of workers. Given the concerns about PC&E’s capabilities and awareness on site safety, BD issued CWOs under Section 23 of the BO on 29 November 2025 [BD/C/14] to the 28 sites in which PC&E is appointed as the RC according to BD’s record.

47. In addition, BD discovered during the special inspection operation that plastic boards/ sheeting were used for covering windows at the external walls of another two sites undergoing renovation works. BD had instructed the respective RCs of these two projects to remove the plastic boards/ sheeting on the windows and ordered temporary cease works of the two projects. The plastic boards/ sheeting were removed promptly.
48. RCs for the above-mentioned 30 projects were required to conduct an independent safety audit for each of the projects and submit to BD individual improvement plans and implement improvement measures for BD’s consideration. Lifting of the CWO and works may only resume until the safety audit and improvement measures are found acceptable by BD.
49. So far, PC&E⁶ has not been responsive in following up the CWOs. The respective RCs of the two cases with plastic boards/ sheeting

⁶ BD received notification from the last AS of PC&E on 5 January 2026 that he had resigned from PC&E with effect from 2 January 2026 onwards. Since there is no AS acting for PC&E for the purposes of the BO, it cannot be appointed to carry out any more building works or street works under section 9 of the BO.

on windows have submitted safety audit reports to justify their safety management for BD's consideration of lifting the CWOs. BD has provided comments on the reports and is vetting the resubmission for one case while pending resubmission and supplementary information for the other.

(iii) *Territory-wide sampling and testing of protective nets of major renovation works*

50. After the WFC fire incident, the general public had raised grave concerns on whether the protective nets used in their building repair/ renovation works conformed to the fire retardant standards as specified by BD. On 28 November 2025, BD promptly launched a special operation, targeting all existing buildings undergoing major external wall repair works where scaffolding protective nets were installed, to collect samples of scaffolding protective nets for testing their fire retardant performance.
51. To more accurately verify whether the protective nets meet the fire retardant requirements, BD adopted a rigorous and comprehensive sampling method, collecting samples from different locations (from the top, middle, and bottom sections) of external walls of the buildings. In general, BD officers randomly obtained two samples of each type of protective nets from every five storeys per façade. This was to ensure that samples were taken not only from the easily accessible parts at the top or bottom of the building blocks. The samples taken were then delivered to the designated laboratories for testing.
52. BD's sample collection action continued until 3 December 2025. Samples were taken from 400 private buildings, of which 356 buildings had large-scale scaffolds. Given the large number of samples taken (with thousands of samples being drawn), the

testing of collected samples is still in progress. BD will take follow up actions as appropriate for cases with suspected irregularities or fraudulent information.

(iv) *Territory-wide operation requiring removal of protective nets and issuance of CWO for 230 private buildings for non-compliance*

53. It was later on discovered by the Police that some laboratory test reports regarding the fire retardant properties of certain protective nets used in building maintenance projects might have involved the use of false instruments. With a view to upholding public safety, DEVB announced on 3 December 2025 an operation requiring the removal of all protective nets at scaffoldings in respect of major renovation works at external walls on or before 6 December 2025.

54. Following the above, BD issued CWOs and instructions⁷ on 4 December 2025, requiring 230 private buildings to remove the protective nets. On 9 December 2025, it was confirmed that protective nets of all the 230 buildings had been removed from the respective works site.

Issue of New PNRC 85

55. Although BD has clear fire retardant performance requirements for protective nets at scaffoldings, the fire incident and the Police's findings reveal instances of using substandard protective nets that did not meet the recognised standards, while some cases raised suspicions of the use of false instruments. After rounds of discussions and consultations with the industry, DEVB announced on 12 December 2025 that BD would promulgate a new

⁷ For default works carried out by BD.

mechanism to ensure the protective materials installed at the scaffolding are in compliance with the recognised standards. The new mechanism aims to uphold public safety while taking practical considerations into account, such as the actual operations at construction sites, the construction project cycle, and the impact on building maintenance works. The new mechanism was promulgated through the new PNRC 85 issued on 19 December 2025. The new requirements are as follows:-

- (a) RCs must obtain test reports for the fire retardant performance of the scaffolding protective materials from suppliers, which must be provided and properly displayed on site for inspection;
- (b) Upon delivery of the scaffolding protective materials to site, RCs must arrange for a third party to randomly select samples. The samples must be taken in specified quantities in accordance with ISO standards and in a specified manner, and submitted to a designated laboratory for testing, with the entire process videotaped. All the samples taken must pass the tests before protective materials can be installed, except for new buildings, for which testing can be carried out after nets are installed. If any single sample fails to meet the recognised standard, the entire batch must not be used;
- (c) The test report should be submitted electronically and affixed with a digital signature for valid authentication of the identity of designated laboratories, and to ensure the integrity of the test report through encryption and digital signature. The electronic report on the test results of samples must be provided to BD for record;
- (d) For off-site sampling, RCs are required to establish a tracking system to the satisfaction of BD to track materials throughout the entire process (i.e. from warehousing, sampling for testing, to collection and delivery to sites for installation on scaffolding) and bind orders, lot/ material delivery records, sampling records

and test reports to facilitate verification and tracking of the lots in compliance with the recognised standards;

- (e) RCs are required to notify BD via the specified form within seven days upon completion of the installation of protective materials on scaffolding. BD will conduct random on-site audit checks and the BD officers will randomly select locations on each façade and request on-site sampling by RCs, and will arrange for the delivery of the samples to the Government Laboratory/ Public Works Laboratories of the Civil Engineering and Development Department for testing; and
- (f) Fire retardant performance of protective materials should be tested periodically (12 months) to ensure compliance with the recognised standards from time to time.

56. The implementation of the above new measures is expected to effectively address the problems of forged test reports and the misrepresentation of substandard products as genuine.

Paragraph 41: BD's involvement in WFC

57. Based on the delegation of duties and power to the ICU, BD has not been involved in the monitoring of the renovation works at WFC.

Paragraph 42: Bamboo scaffolding and metal scaffolding

58. Since the WFC fire incident is still under investigation, BD is not in a position to comment on the possible causes of fire at this juncture.
59. Bamboo scaffolds are customarily used in Hong Kong with long historical background. Both bamboo and metal scaffolds are safe for use provided that the requirements of the legislation and relevant codes of practice are complied with. The fire resistance

properties of bamboo are inferior to those of metal. Metal scaffolds are formed by articulating properly designed components including members, planks, brackets and accessories, resulting in a more engineered and controlled working platform, passages and walkway to the users. However, regardless of whether the scaffolds are made of metal or bamboo, protective screens would be provided to cover the façade of buildings under construction and repair works.

60. Based on industry opinions and BD's observations, the advantages of using bamboo scaffolds are their flexibility and lightweight, which are particularly suited to the limited space commonly found in Hong Kong. Besides, bamboo scaffolds can be erected and dismantled quickly and are more economical than metal scaffolds. Observations reveal bamboo scaffolds are commonly used in building industry for new building projects, A&A works, repair works and maintenance works including external works for individual premises, localised external pipe repair/ replacement works, interior works at high level, etc.
61. The Government is developing a roadmap to switch from bamboo scaffolding with metal scaffolding under suitable conditions. However, the Government recognises Hong Kong's unique circumstances and will not implement a blanket switch to metal scaffolding. DEVB will collaborate with the Construction Industry Council and the industry to develop a roadmap.

Paragraph 43-49: Access panels to the exit staircase

WFC's staircase windows in compliance with current standards

62. WFC is a **HOS** estate, which was exempted from the provisions of the BO under section 41(1)(aa) of the BO at the time when it was

built. BD has not approved nor has any knowledge about the design and construction of WFC, such as whether there were fire-rated glass panels at the exit staircases when the building estate was built.

63. Clause C9.7 of the FS Code provides that where any external wall of a required staircase and its protected lobby opposing, either directly or indirectly, and within 6m of:-

- (a) the opposite side of a street;
- (b) a common boundary with an adjoining site;
- (c) any other external wall having a fire resisting rating (“**FRR**”) of less than that required for the wall separating the required staircase or protected lobby concerned from the rest of the building, or other opening not protected by fixed light with an FRR of that required for the wall of the required staircase or protected lobby concerned of the same building; or
- (d) any other building on the same site;

that part of the external wall should have an FRR of not less than that required for the wall separating such exit staircase or protected lobby from the remainder of the building.

64. Subject to ICU’s confirmation, if the staircase windows of WFC (say Wang Cheong House) conform with the abovementioned conditions, provision of fire-rated fixed windows at the exit staircase is not required.

65. However, when scaffolding was erected at the re-entrant and some windows of the exit staircases were removed and replaced with wooden access doors which are combustible, and the window openings are suspected to be misused for access of workers and delivery of materials to the scaffolding, all these allowed the exit

route to communicate with the working area at the external wall, introducing additional fire hazard to, and adversely affecting the normal function of, the exit staircases. It would result in non-compliance with clause F5.6(a) of FS Code which requires all means of escape should be maintained at all times, and should be free from obstruction and adequately signed and lit. Compounded by other factors such as the risk arising from the suspected use of protective nets not meeting the recognised fire retardant standards and extensive use of combustible foam boards to cover windows at the external walls, the fire hazard could be significantly increased.

66. Subject to further investigation, the combustible wooden access doors inside an exit staircase do not seem to comply with clause E13.1(a) of the FS Code which requires linings of internal walls, ceiling and decorative finishes within protected exits having limited combustibility as per Table E1 of the FS Code. The wooden doors may also obstruct the natural lighting to the staircase, which may contravene section 35 of the B(C)R and regulation 40 of the Building (Planning) Regulations (Cap. 123F) respectively. To maintain the function of the exit staircases during the course of repair works, the exit staircases should be kept unobstructed without any additional source of fire hazards (Clause F5.6 (a) to (d) of the FS Code are relevant). Furthermore, taking account of the observations depicted in paragraph 65 above, the installation of combustible wooden doors giving access to the scaffolding, introducing additional fire hazard and/ or creating obstruction to the exit route also indicates that the construction methods and precautionary measures in place were inappropriate and thus should not be acceptable under section 16 of the B(C)R.
67. BD has not been involved in the monitoring of the renovation works of WFC. According to BD's records, no enquiries or

complaints related to the replacement of glass panels along the escape routes of WFC was received by BD before the fire broke out on 26 November 2025.

68. In general, the “window replacement works” or “formation/alteration to the openings to staircases/ its lobbies” are MW items and thus replacement of fire-rated glass panels for exit staircase can be carried out under the simplified requirements of MWCS as long as the fire resisting construction for the original design of the exit staircase will not be prejudiced. Plan submission for prior approval and consent by ICU (which acted under authority delegated by BA in the WFC case) is not required under the BO. That said, appropriate construction methods and procedures must be adopted and appropriate precautionary measures must be taken in carrying out the building works in accordance with section 16 of the B(C)R.

69. Since late December 2025, BD has launched a special inspection operation, conducting audit checks on the approximately 400 private buildings undergoing major repairs to check if the repair works are being carried out with proper fire safety precautionary measures in place and identify any malpractices that may pose fire safety risks to the occupants and the public. The scope of inspection includes whether fire barriers (such as fire doors or fire-resistant fixed windows) have been removed, whether flammable materials (such as polystyrene foam boards) are used to cover external walls or windows, whether improper procedures such as creating openings in escape staircases for transporting materials have been carried out, and other matters affecting fire safety. Up till 15 January 2026, two out of 145 inspected buildings were found to have staircase windows removed at isolated locations and BD has already issued warning letters and required rectification of the irregularities identified.

Paragraph 50: Use of foam boards to cover windows

70. As far as fire safety is concerned, the external walls, claddings and curtain walls are required to be constructed of non-combustible materials according to Part 8 of the B(C)R. Requirements for fire resisting construction are stipulated in Part 10 of the B(C)R under which a building must be designed and constructed so as to, in case of fire, inhibit the spread of fire within the building and to the buildings nearby; provide adequate resistance to the spread of fire and smoke between different buildings and in the building between different uses; and maintain the stability of the building to allow adequate time for safe evacuation; rescue and firefighting, and avoid any consequential damage to the buildings nearby, etc.
71. Section 16 of the B(C)R requires appropriate construction methods and procedures must be taken and appropriate precautionary measures must be adopted in carrying out building works. Clause F5.6(f) of the FS Code requires any inflammable and combustible materials to be kept in the building should be stored under safe custody and avoid accumulating excessive quantity. PNAP APP-70 requires obstruction to natural ventilation and lighting of occupied buildings under renovation by sheeting erected around the walls of buildings should be avoided as far as practicable.
72. The foam boards believed to be applied for protecting windows from debris are suspected to be inflammable, which had brought about additional fire hazards to the buildings. Subject to further investigation, the extensive use of foam boards at the external walls is in contravention with the above requirements. The foam boards might also have blocked the occupants' sight of the severity of the fire and delayed their response to leave the buildings.

73. BD has not been involved in the monitoring of the renovation works of WFC. According to BD's records, no enquiries or complaints related to foam boards at the external walls of WFC were received by BD before the fire broke out on 26 November 2025. Complaints or enquiries concerning WFC received by BD were related to other subjects such as building defects, malpractice of the management office, suspected bid rigging of tender, the performance and registration of the main contractor, PC&E. As WFC are sold HOS buildings regulated by ICU, except for the enquiries on the registration status of PC&E which were handled by BD, other enquiries and complaints had been referred to ICU for their follow-up as appropriate. The enquires and complaints related to WFC received by BD at **[BD/B/1, BD/B/2, BD/B/4, BD/B/6 to BD/B/23]** are listed in part B of the LoD.
74. During the special operation in November 2025 covering inspection of scaffolds and collection of safety nets for some 400 private buildings as mentioned in paragraph 46 above, two buildings were found having plastic boards/ sheeting installed to cover windows of the buildings. The BD's follow-up actions have been depicted in paragraphs 46 and 47 above. From the findings of the above inspections, extensive covering of windows using foam boards may not be considered as common practice in major maintenance and repair works in the territory.
75. With the aim to step up audit checks for large scale building repair works for enhancing building safety, BD is arranging resources to conduct periodic inspections on existing buildings undergoing major repair works, no matter whether the buildings are subject to statutory orders/ notices/ fire safety directions or not, in order to identify the fire safety risks and require rectification of any deficiencies in fire safety precautions to ensure safety. The audit

inspections will continue to be risk-based, considering factors such as building type, number of floors, scale and scope of repair works.

Part II – Building plans, drawings and designs of WFC in relation to renovation works

Paragraphs 51-52: Building Drawings and Design

76. Since WFC is an estate under HOS, it was exempted from the provisions of the BO under section 41(1)(aa) of the BO at the time it was built. BD has not approved the plans nor has any knowledge about the design and construction of WFC buildings. No occupation permit was issued by the BA under the BO for WFC. In this connection, BD does not possess the building plans/drawings of WFC.

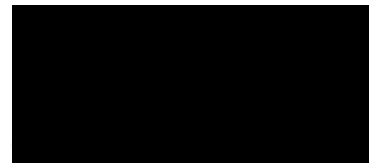
Paragraphs 53: Building Separation

77. Performance Requirement C1 in Subsection A9 of Part A of the FS Code specifies that a building should be provided with adequate fire safety provisions to inhibit the spread of fire between buildings or other property.
78. Subsection C5 of the FS Code specifies that every building should be suitably enclosed by fire rated external walls and roof to ensure protection against spread of fire to adjoining buildings or site for the prevention of fire spread between buildings. Specifically, for buildings on the same site that are less than 1.8 m apart, the fire rating requirements as set out in Clause C5.2 of the FS Code should be complied with.
79. Apart from fire safety aspect, separation between buildings may

be affected by other aspects. For example, building separation requirements of the Sustainable Building Design Guidelines (“SBDG”) promulgated through PNAP APP-152 [BD/A/47] aims to improve air ventilation, enhance the environmental quality at pedestrian level and mitigate heat island effects arising from the undesirable screening effect of long buildings at different levels. Compliance with the SBDG which is one of the prerequisites for granting gross floor area concession is not a mandatory requirement nor intended to safeguard the fire safety of the building.

80. As a follow-up to the WFC fire, BD and FSD will jointly conduct a study with a view to establishing a standard of safe distance between buildings requiring scaffolding for major repair works. BD will also explore a mechanism to coordinate major repair works for buildings in close vicinity with a view to enforcing such safety standard.
81. I confirm that the contents of this Witness Statement are true to the best of my knowledge, information and belief.

Dated this 19th day of January 2026.



Yue Chak Sang

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