

Introducing Fire Safety Star Rating

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ABSTRACT

Like many countries, Thailand has faced difficulties introducing Fire Safety Standards. Building owners are not prepared to invest on Fire Safety and the public is not aware of the risk on fire. Enforcing regulation alone is not effective, especially when building owners are facing financial difficulty from economic crisis.

Fire Safety Star Rating has been promoted to voluntarily promote Fire Safety Standards.

It will be the first time that Thai Building Regulation MR58, which govern building annual inspection, will include Fire Safety Rating in red, yellow and green, which is also voluntary. Running along with the new regulation, Engineering Institute of Thailand (EIT) will also introducing Fire Safety Rating 1-5. The program has been designed to benefit the public knowledge, the local authorities, and the building owners who would be able to promote their building services, quality and rent.

PRIME MINISTER FIRE SAFETY AWARDS

In 2001, National Safety Council (NSC) with EIT has launched Prime Minister Fire Safety Awards for selected buildings, focussing on high rise office buildings and hotels. Selection based on Fire Rating no.3 with minimum weight of 70%, and 7 buildings were selected by EIT inspection groups and approved by EIT Fire Safety Committee and NSC. This is the pilot program and a very good exercise for building inspection on fire safety. The buildings that entered the program are voluntary and had to pay entering fee to EIT. EIT allow the awarded buildings to present the certification award in their lobby.

MR 58

Ministerial regulation 58, which has already been drafted and will be announced in 2002, asks building owners for high rise and large building, including public building, such as disco, entertainment, cinema to have annual building inspection.

Since old buildings (before 1992) were built according to old regulation, these building will receive "Red" certificate, when they meet requirement on MR47.

Any building which meet 1992 regulation, or MR33, will receive "Yellow" certificate.

Building which meet latest regulation, including MR50 and EIT standards, will receive "Green" certificate.

Therefore, beside enforcement, MR58 also promote old building to improve their fire safety standards to a higher level.

EIT FIRE SAFETY STAR RATING

EIT has further promoted synergy of Fire Safety Standards by EIT Fire Safety Star Rating, or EIT 1-5 program.

With the believe on the effectiveness of voluntary participation of public and building owner, EIT as private and prime engineering institution under his majesty the King Patronage, has the capability to raise public awareness on Fire Safety Standards further. EIT Fire Safety Standards was first announced in 1983, later in 1997 and the latest 2002. The standards have been developed on selected NFPA, Australian, BS, IEC and other known international standards, including study from Thailand case study from previous fires. Standards on electrical safety are based on IEC. Standards on fire monitoring are based on Australian. Standards on sprinkler system, mean of egress are based on NFPA. Standards for testing are based on BS and ASME.

EIT no. 1, 2 and 3 is equivalent to Red, Yellow and Green building inspection certificate.

EIT no. 4 is the higher standards of EIT.

EIT no. 5 includes control of building interior material.

Building that enter the program is voluntary and have to pay fee to EIT for the approval and issue of certificate.

PREPARATION

This Fire Safety Rating program has been discussed since 1999. During this time, EIT has developed training program, where more than 150 engineers, architect, fire safety officers were trained. These groups had established Building Safety Inspection Club since 1999. EIT has also developed standard inspection form for both building inspector and building owner.

Of course, EIT has also been active in drafting MR 58.

CONCLUSION

The Fire Safety Star Rating could be another tactics for effectively promotion of Fire Safety Standards. There was comment whether safety can be determined in safety levels. It is either safe or not safe in one sense. However, in reality, it is different in standards, and the rating system is well understood by the public. It is hope that Thailand, which has been notorious on the level of fire safety standards with several fire disasters, would start with a better public awareness and fire safety standards from 2000.