INTRODUCTION TO SUPPLEMENTAL EVACUATION

Can Fire Service guarantee 100% that they'll turn up at an incident in the shortest possible time? In reality, for a variety of reasons, there will be occasions due to traffic or climatic conditions or other external factors where an attendance will be delayed or in some cases not possible at all. So, would it be better and safer for the management of tall buildings and employers occupying high rise offices to ensure all persons can be evacuated prior to the arrival of the fire service? The fire-fighters will assist in the evacuation if people are still in the building when they arrive.

All fire starts small and will grow if it does not extinguish in time. Experts say tall buildings can act like chimneys, and fast-moving smoke can pose a danger to people in a building well before the flames reach their floors. So, if there is a fire in your building you want to get everyone out quickly prior to the arrival of the Fire Service.

It is in the opinion of many Fire Service Departments that it is the responsibility of the management of tall buildings and employers occupying high rise offices to ensure all persons can be evacuated in the event of an emergency. It is NOT the Fire Service responsibility to evacuate building users. The fire-fighters will assist in the evacuation if people are still in the building when they arrive.

No Fire Service can guarantee 100% to turn up at an incident in the shortest possible time for a variety of reasons. There will be occasions due to traffic or climatic conditions or other external factors where an attendance will be delayed or in some cases not possible at all. Even when they arrive at the fire scene, they would find it difficult to deploy and operate fire aerial ladder trucks or the fire sky-lift trucks in narrow streets or congested areas. There's also a time delay for them to get up onto the fire floor or the refuge floor with their gears whether it be 20, 30, 40, 50 floors by stairs if the lifts/elevator is not working. That answers to the question of refuges for the disabled or indeed rescue for persons with other disabilities. That means that the building management and employer will put people with disabilities at risk in the event of a fire emergency if they do not have methods of rescue them without reliance of external assistance.

Fire in an occupied high-rise could mean having to evacuate hundreds, or perhaps thousands, of people in difficult and dangerous conditions. For examples, having to evacuate a building in darkness due to power outage; having to evacuate people on wheelchair if the elevator is not working or if the stairway is not accessible because of smoke and fire. All of these circumstances and more have to be planned for if the building evacuation is to be successful. That is where preparedness in **Supplemental Evacuation** comes into play. This may be by structural adaptation, active fire safety systems, building evacuation planning, provision of supplemental evacuation products and staffing arrangements or other means. **Supplemental Evacuation** is not a luxury but risks reduction strategy in tackling the perceived difficulties and problems of building evacuation.

A building evacuation plan is of limited use if half of the people it is designed for do not understand their respective roles and responsibilities. Planning for building evacuation and conducting periodic fire drill/evacuation drill is important because, when confronted with a dire situation, many people simply do not know what to do or where to start. However, having contingency plans that account for multiple 'what if' scenarios including alternative escape routes and modes of evacuation would minimize evacuation hazards and allowing more people to be evacuated in difficult conditions. Once the emergency is announced, it likely is too late to start a back-up plan.

In January 2009, the National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) in the United States approved the use of "**Supplemental Evacuation Technology**" in high rise buildings to assist in rapid escape in an emergency. NFPA also approved the use of **Supplemental Evacuation Technology** in official and/or mandatory Evacuation Plans.

Today, Escape Consult Mobiltex (S) Pte Ltd is the regional representative for several manufacturers of **Supplemental Evacuation** products that include the Evac+Chair, Ingstrom Escape Chute systems, MARK Save A Life rescue systems, Photoluminescent markings, evacuation signs and step nosing products in the ASEAN region. Our services include consultation, installation, training, and after sales service. For more information on **Supplemental Evacuation**, please visit our new website: www.escapeconsult.biz