

By post and email at rfe@hkfsd.gov.hk

19 January 2018

Fire Safety Command
North Wing, 7/F
Fire Services Headquarters Building
1 Hong Chong Road
Tsim Sha Tsui East, Kowloon
[Attn: Mr TSANG Wing Hung]

Dear Mr TSANG

Consultation on Implementation Details of the Registered Fire Engineer Scheme

Thank you for inviting the Institution to provide views on the captioned subject. We are pleased to provide herewith our views and suggestions on the subject matters for your consideration.

Thank you for your attention.

Yours sincerely



Ir Thomas CHAN Kwok Cheung
President
The Hong Kong Institution of Engineers

Enc.

Enclosure

Views from the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers on Consultation on Implementation Details of the Registered Fire Engineer Scheme

The Hong Kong Institution of Engineers (HKIE) in general supports the implementation of the Registered Fire Engineer (RFE) Scheme and considers that the Scheme could enhance the efficiency of issuance of licence or its equivalent of compliance or registration for prescribed premises. We are pleased to provide further professional views and support as appropriate to the Administration in regard to the Consultation. To better facilitate the implementation and effectiveness of the Scheme, the HKIE provides herewith further suggestions in the ensuing sections for consideration.

Applicable Premises

2. While notifying the prescribed premises to be covered under the Scheme as listed in *Appendix I*, the HKIE suggests the Administration to draw a timeline for the implementation of the Scheme to other premises.

Classes and Duties of RFEs

3. Noting that the RFEs in three classes are responsible to the application for licence or its equivalent, we recommend the Administration to consider providing a flow chart of the procedures on obtaining a license from the regulatory authority for easier understanding.

4. While it is stated that RFE (Fire Service Installation) (RFE(FSI)) and RFE (Ventilating System) (RFE(VentS)) are not allowed to be the proprietor, shareholder, director, partner or employee of the contractor responsible for the related work, the HKIE suggests the Administration to clarify whether the same practice would be applicable to RFE (Risk Assessment) (RFE(RA)).

5. For the duties of RFE(RA), the Administration is suggested to be more specific in elaborating the details of “*fire safety risk assessments*” conducted by RFE(RA). Also, clarification on whether the roles and/or duties of the RFEs would cover the competency of fire safety consultant and competent person as stipulated in the *Code of Practice for Fire Safety in Buildings* issued by the Building Department is suggested to be provided.

6. In the long run, it is hoped that the roles of the RFEs could also be extended to other fire engineering-related works (e.g. mini-storage, dangerous goods store, timber store, private columbaria and e-waste disposal facilities and premises under the *Fire Safety (Commercial Premises) Ordinance (Cap. 502)* and the *Fire Safety (Buildings) Ordinance (Cap. 572)*, etc.) as well as project management of the relevant fire engineering works to ensure that the projects are professionally implemented.

Eligibility Criteria

7. It is noted that the Scheme will allow a competent person who practices in the fire safety field but is not a Registered Professional Engineer (R.P.E.) under the *Engineers Registration Ordinance (Cap. 409)* to register as a RFE. For the R.P.E.s who are eligible to register in all three RFE categories, we suggest the Administration to clarify whether they will need to attend all interviews with three different Interview Boards or a Common Interview Board instead. The HKIE would be pleased to nominate our members to serve on the relevant boards and/or panels where required.

8. It is suggested that the Authorised Signatories under the *Building Ordinance (Cap. 123)*, who are qualified to carry out the inspection of ventilation system, could also be considered to be included under the Scheme with exemption from interviews, in spite of the fact that their experience are not covered under the qualification requirements of RFE (VentS).

9. While the requirements for registration as a RFE have been clearly stated, the Administration may consider aligning the relevant qualification and experience requirements with that of the HKIE Fire Discipline for clarity. In particular to the academic qualifications of applicants, the Administration may refer to the admission requirements for the HKIE Fire Discipline for reference and consideration.

Issues of Codes of Practice (CoP) and Guidelines

10. We consider that the CoP and administrative guidelines are essential to the effectiveness of the Scheme and the HKIE is pleased to offer our professional expertise to the Administration in formulating the relevant documents. The Administration is also suggested to refer to the similar example of licensed plumbers under the Water Supplies Department when setting out the list of disciplinary offences.

11. The Administration is suggested to include a timeframe for the issuance of the relevant CoP and administrative guidelines, and to set up a dedicated team which includes major stakeholders to help prepare such.

Disciplinary and Appeal Mechanisms

12. Regarding the composition of the Disciplinary and Appeal Boards, we recommend the Administration to increase the number of members of the Boards from 5 to 9 with inclusion of 2 officers from the Fire Services Department (FSD) in order to avoid possible bias in decision-making. The HKIE would be pleased to nominate our members to serve on the concerned Boards.

13. Elaboration on the level of penalty and offences punishment should be stated clearly for determining the consequences of any misconduct of the RFEs. On top of that, a RFE disciplinary-offence point system is suggested to be imposed. The Driving-offence Points System of the Transport Department is an example that can be taken as reference.

14. In particular to the proposed disciplinary offences applicable to RFEs, the Administration is also suggested to clarify whether the deviated fire safety risk assessment conducted by RFE(RA) will be considered as a disciplinary offence or not.

Quality Assurance

15. Regarding the fire safety requirements formulated by RFE(RA), the HKIE views that the performance pledge, if any, for the FSD in endorsing the relevant requirements should be practicable so as to “*make good use of professional and qualified human resources in the market*” as stated in the Consultation Document.

16. We consider that a succinct mechanism and scope of audit works should be established and agreed amongst all major stakeholders in regard to the random audit inspection of premises conducted by the FSD. In addition, the roles and responsibilities of the RFEs and clients in the inspection should be elaborated.