

TRANSCRIPT

Oriental Daily Video on Fire Hazard in the Slums

<http://www.vfnw.org/7354/ontv-video-fire-hazard-refugee-slums/>

Caption: The problem of illegally built subdivided units is severe. Legislative council members urge the Lands Department to enforce the law.

0:00 - 0:15

In January, a subdivided unit in Ng Ka Tsuen, Pak Heung, Yuen Long was suspected to have a short circuit that caused a fire. Due to the accident, a Sri Lankan man was killed. This fire has revealed that the problem of illegally built housing around the village house and farmland is severe.

0:15 - 0:25

We have been to what we believe to be a discarded pigsty which is near the accident, and we have found an illegally built house with an area of two basketball courts with two stories.

0:25 - 0:32

Each floor were subdivided into 15 rooms with 50 to 100 sq. feet for lease.

0:32 - 0:39

Around 35 refugees, including South Asians and torture claimant applicants, live there.

0:39 - 1:00

The place which is built of wood and zinc has a high risk of fire accidents. Wires are exposed, and corridors are narrow.

1:00 - 1:06

Residents use liquefied petroleum gas cylinders to cook in a poorly ventilated room.

1:06 - 1:15

The wreckages of a fire accident from years before are still there.

1:15 - 1:27

A similar case also appears near Kam Po Rad, a ten-minute drive from Ng Ka Tsuen. A resident there knows that living in such a house is not safe, but he has no choice because of the financial difficulty of renting a house somewhere else.

- Interview Begins -

1:27 - 1:55

"Before, another fire has happened in a room. We are so scared that someday a fire will happen when we live there. We live there because it only costs about 1500 to rent. The other places cost 2000 or more. We cannot afford it."

- Interview Ends -

1:55 - 1:59

A engineer (Lo Kok-keung, Visiting Engineer in the HK Polytechnic University) warns that cooking in such a chamber may lead to explosions.

1:59 - 2:24

"Exhausted air comes out when cooking, and it will be trapped in the room. People may suffer from fainting because of the accumulated carbon monoxide. The LPG-air may cause an explosion with an estimated power equal to a moving car going 20 km/h hitting a gateway."

2:24 - 2:28

A Legislative Council Member (Hon Alice MAK Mei-kuen, JP) criticised that the Lands Department is not enforcing the laws seriously.

2:28 - 2:42

"The Land Department cannot waive the responsibility of inspection. The Government should not let this problem remain unseen anymore. The Land Department should go there for inspection more frequently to find out about this illegal land use."

2:42 - 2:50

The Spokesperson of the Land Department has confirmed that the two abovementioned lands are

farmland and should only be used for piggeries and chicken coops.

2:50 - 2:55

It is against the Government Leases Ordinance if there are buildings that are not permitted.

2:55 - 2:57

The Land Department has sent warning letters to the property owners.

2:57 - 3:00

Encumbrance will be imposed if no corrections are made.

3:00 - 3:05

The Spokesperson of the Fire Service Department stated that they do not have statistics of the number of fire accidents in buildings that are modified from farmlands.

3:05 - 3:15

The number of fire accidents related to squatter houses is 387, and they have caused 13 deaths and 35 injuries.