

Burden of fire safety is on building owners, Dubai conference told

Nadeem Hanif

September 23, 2013 Updated: September 23, 2013 22:02:00

DUBAI // Building owners have been urged to ensure [fire safety](#) standards are met and maintained in their properties, or risk serious loss of life in a fire.

“There needs to be much more emphasis on building owners to make sure their buildings are as safe as possible,” Fathi Tarada, managing director of UK fire safety consultancy Mosen, told a conference in Dubai.

“The problem isn’t day one after the building opens. It’s what happens a year, two years or five years down the line when things perhaps aren’t being as well maintained. The onus must be on the owners to maintain safety.”

Dubai Civil Defence works with architects and building owners to make sure properties [conform to strict safety regulations](#).

“Although Civil Defence does do checks on buildings every year it simply isn’t feasible for them to be able to check every building and make sure things are working as they should be,” Mr Tarada said.

He urged a [culture of responsibility](#) among owners to create a duty of care to the people working or living in their buildings.

“Over the lifetime of a building changes tend to be made or there is a change of use from its original purpose and we need to make sure that process does not harm fire safety,” he said.

Gary Reason, director of operational resilience and training at London Fire Brigade, also urged owners to take responsibility.

“With the finite resources that the civil defence or fire brigade has it’s just not possible to constantly inspect buildings to make sure everything is in order,” he said.

“In the UK the owner is legally responsible for making sure a building is safe. As a fire brigade we have an enforcement role to play.”

Dubai’s skyline of high rise towers also poses challenges for firefighters.

“You need a different approach in these types of buildings because firefighting platforms don’t go higher than the eighth or ninth floors,” said Mr Reason.

In London’s newest skyscraper, the Shard, Europe’s tallest building at 306 metres, special fireproof lifts are used to ferry people to the ground in case of an emergency.

“Our fire crews also have a dedicated set of lifts they can use to go directly to the affected floors,” said Mr Reason.

Lt Taher Hassan Al Taher of Dubai Civil Defence told delegates building inspections were carried out regularly.

“Even before a building is built we look at the designs to see if they meet our requirements and fire-safety standards,” he said.

“After that we have agreements with owners to make sure they are maintaining their buildings.”

A revision of the fire-safety requirements could be ready by June next year.

A 24/7 radio link between the Dubai Civil Defence operations room and critical buildings, including hospitals and schools, is expected to be extended to the rest of the UAE. No date was given.

Related



■ Two men still missing as rescuer dig through rubble of Dubai warehouse blaze

■ Major fires in the UAE

■ Evictions are necessary for safety

📺 Video: Civil Defence officials witness fire resistance tests

🗨️ Fire-safety code is a work in progress

Topic UAE Topics Dubai Fire safety

The next phase of the system will include GPS to guide fire crews to an incident.

The fourth annual Middle East FireSafe conference ends on Wednesday.

nhanif@thenational.ae