

BD launches API to remind public not to alter or remove structural walls illegally

The Buildings Department (BD) today (May 20) launched a new set of [television](#) and radio announcements in the public interest to remind members of the public that the alteration or removal of structural walls without prior approval and consent from the BD constitutes unauthorised building works (UBWs). Removal of a structural wall is not only illegal, but can also lead to serious consequences. If such cases are found, the BD will take enforcement actions, including serving statutory orders requiring the owners to rectify the UBWs. The BD will also carry out investigations and instigate prosecution against persons involved in such illegal works.

A spokesman for the BD stressed that owners should not carry out any UBWs and it is their responsibility to keep their premises free of UBWs. Any person who intends to carry out alteration and addition works (A&A works) is advised to consult building professionals for advice, including the feasibility of the works, and where necessary, apply for approval and consent from the BD to ensure building safety and compliance with the Buildings Ordinance (BO).

In addition, building professionals and contractors are required to carefully examine the approved plans and other relevant documents to observe the relevant requirements under the BO, and to ascertain whether prior approval from the BD should be obtained before commencement of the works, to ensure safety of the occupants and structural safety of the building.

According to the provisions of the BO, any person who wants to carry out building works (including A&A works) in private buildings, except works that are exempted under the BO or minor works that may be carried out under the simplified procedures of the Minor Works Control System, should appoint an authorised person to submit the plans to the BD for approval and obtain consent from the department before commencing such works by a registered contractor. It is a serious offence for any person who knowingly carries out any building works without prior approval. If convicted, the person is liable to a maximum fine of \$400,000 and two years' imprisonment. Moreover, any person who carries out works in such a manner that it causes or is likely to cause a risk of injury to any person or damage to any property shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a maximum fine of \$1,000,000 and imprisonment for three years.

Any person who, without reasonable excuse, fails to comply with a removal order against UBWs shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine of \$200,000 and imprisonment for one year, and a further fine of \$20,000 for each day that the offence has continued.

The spokesman said that before carrying out A&A works in buildings, members of the public may inspect and order copies of the approved plans and relevant structural calculation documents, as well as minor works records, through the BD's Building Records Access and Viewing On-line (BRAVO) system.

The BD's Building Information Centre will organise briefing sessions on Basic Information on Approved Plans to enable the public to understand the basic information on the plans, including how to distinguish structural walls from non-structural walls. Upcoming briefings will be held on June 12, July 17 and August 14. Interested persons may visit the BD's [website](#) for more details and reservations.

The BD has also published a new pamphlet entitled "A Simple Guide to Alteration and Addition Works in Domestic Premises", which sets out the major considerations when carrying out A&A works in domestic premises. The pamphlet and a set of frequently asked questions and answers are available on the BD [website](#) for public reference.