

**PRESS RELEASE**

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SPEECH BY MR CHIN HARN TONG, SENIOR PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY (HOME AFFAIRS), AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF JURONG WEST FIRE STATION ON SATURDAY, 21 FEBRUARY 1987 AT 10.00 AM

**FIRE INCIDENT RATE STILL HIGH**

Last year, a total of more than 5,000 fires caused damage to goods and property amounting to \$17.3 million. Seven valuable lives were also lost. During the five-year period between 1977 and 1981, there was an average of 4,703 fires per year or 12.9 per day. From 1982 to 1986, this average figure rose to 5,646 per year or 15.5 per day. The fire incident rate in Singapore is still considered high.

**DANGERS OF HIGH-RISE AND INDUSTRIAL FIRES**

Singapore today has over 3,500 high-rise buildings with some 250 of them used as hotels, offices and shopping centres etc. Over the past two decades, a total of about 9,300 factories providing jobs for a large number of people have been set up.

The damage from fires in such buildings can be extensive if help does not arrive in time. Any delay in responding to a fire alarm, means some of us losing our jobs when a factory closes down permanently or even if it is shut down temporarily, after being gutted by a fire; others might lose their homes or loved ones and suffer untold misery and hardship.

The Singapore Fire Service must continue to upgrade itself to meet the changes in our country. It is important

that the Singapore Fire Service continue to ensure that Singapore is a safe place for all to live and work in and also to invest in.

#### FASTER RESPONSE THROUGH MORE STATIONS AND COMPUTERISATION

The building of more and better located fire stations is one such measure taken to make Singapore safer. This station is the second fire station built in the Jurong area. Apart from being able to handle all types of fires, this station is specially equipped to combat industrial and chemical fires. Together with the existing Jurong Fire Station, the Singapore Fire Service will be able to respond rapidly to a fire call in any part of Jurong.

Along with the building of more fire stations, the Singapore Fire Service has embarked on a project to computerise its Command and Control Centre. This project when completed in mid-1988 will, amongst other things, ensure that fire engines can be despatched more quickly to the scene of fire, thus giving the fire fighters a better chance to save lives and reduce the damage caused by the fire.

#### THE PUBLIC'S ROLE: PREVENTING FIRE

The Singapore Fire Service, however, must not be alone in the battle against fires. All of us have a part to play. Whilst the Fire Service is responsible for putting out fires, the rest of us should help to prevent fires from happening in the first place, both at home and in our work places.

Fires are often caused by ignorance and carelessness. More than 2,700 cases of fires in 1986 were caused by lighted matches or cigarettes which were carelessly dropped on the floor, and another 464 cases

caused by cooking fires which were left unattended. These fires could have been prevented if we had taken the trouble to observe the basic rules of fire safety and made them part of our way of life.

#### JAPANESE EXAMPLE

In Japan, every citizen accepts the fight against fire as a personal challenge. He would feel ashamed of himself and for his family if he is guilty of starting a fire. More importantly, he views his failure in preventing the fire as an act of great disservice and injustice to his community. This sense of personal commitment to the well-being of society amongst the Japanese has helped to prevent the number of fire incidents from rising over the years and even contribute to a fall in the number of fires in Japan. We can learn from them.

In conclusion, I urge everyone to be more conscious of the hazards of fire and to help make Singapore as fire free as possible. I now have great pleasure in declaring open the Jurong West Fire Station.

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