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Voluntary Building Assessment Scheme

Building neglect has been a long-standing problem in Hong Kong. As prevention is better than cure, the HKSAR Government has determined to amend the Buildings Ordinance after two rounds of public consultation conducted in 2003 and 2005. Finally, the Buildings Department (BD) has implemented the Mandatory Building Inspection Scheme (MBIS) and Mandatory Window Inspection Scheme (MWIS) on 30 June 2012 after LegCo's endorsement to tackle the building neglect problem in the long run.

To support the two mandatory inspection schemes, the Hong Kong Housing Society (HKHS) undertook to develop the Voluntary Building Assessment Scheme (VBAS) from 2006 with the support and assistance from the building related industries. VBAS has been fully implemented on 17 July 2012. It aims to provide an alternative for the owners of well managed buildings without having to undergo the mandatory inspections and, through positive recognition of the VBAS, owners will be motivated to take their own initiatives to properly manage and timely maintain their properties, thereby raising the overall quality standard of building management in Hong Kong. To enhance the credibility, acceptance and transparency of the VBAS, HKHS invited representatives of BD, Home Affairs Department (HAD), professional institutes and organizations of various disciplines including Architects, Surveyors, Engineers, Environmental Professionals and Property Managers to actively participating in the development of the VBAS assessment mechanism.

HKHS conducted 3 trial assessments before the VBAS was formally implemented. With the help and support of the Hong Kong Association of Property Management Companies (HKAPMC) and its member-companies, there were 78 buildings participated in the trial assessments. After a number of revisions and enhancements, HKHS started promoting the VBAS in May 2012 by arranging training programmes for related building professionals and inviting applications for registration as VBAS Assessors. VBAS has started accepting applications for building certification since July 2012. All private domestic buildings and composite buildings (domestic & commercial) in Hong Kong, of any building age and with building management, are welcome to join the VBAS.

Through the comprehensive and rigorous building assessment of the VBAS, buildings with quality building management and maintenance will be awarded with Premium Certificates and Quality Labels, including the “Building Management Quality Label”, “Building Maintenance & Repair Quality Label” / “Building Maintenance & Repair Excellent Quality Label” and “Environmental Awareness Quality Label”. The buildings which have been awarded with the Premium Certificates will be recognized by the BD as having fulfilled the requirements under the MBIS and MWIS (for windows in common parts only) and will not be selected as target buildings in the respective inspection cycles under the MBIS and MWIS for undergoing mandatory inspections.

The building assessment under the VBAS consists of two main categories, i.e. Building Safety Category and Building Management Category. Assessment of the Building Safety Category covers 6 Elements namely “External Elements and Other Physical Elements”, “Structural Elements”, “Fire Safety Elements”, “Drainage System”, “Unauthorized Building Works” and “Window Elements (for windows in common parts only)”. As for the Building Management Category, the assessment covers 4 Elements namely “Building Maintenance Elements”, “Building Management Elements”, “Environmental Protection Elements” and “Value-added Elements”.

The VBAS Assessor shall conduct an one-off building inspection and assessment of the past records on building management and maintenance in accordance with the condition of the building at the time of assessment. Although there is no assessment cycle set for the VBAS, HKHS encourages owners to conduct regular assessment to their buildings in order to ensure the buildings are continuously maintained in good conditions and to maintain the prestige of the Premium Certificates and Quality Labels awarded under the VBAS.

For buildings aged 30 or above, if owners would like to gain BD’s continuous recognition as having fulfilled the requirements of MBIS and thus will not be required to undergo mandatory inspections in the respective inspection cycles, building assessment under VBAS shall be carried out at least once in a period of 10 years. For maintaining BD’s continuous recognition as having fulfilled the requirements of MWIS (for windows in common parts only), building assessment under VBAS shall be carried out at least once in a period of 5 years.

VBAS is operated under the supervision of the Hong Kong Quality Building Assessment Panel (Panel) and its three Sub-Committees set up by the HKHS. The Panel Secretariat is responsible for the daily operation of the VBAS.

Voluntary Building Assessment Scheme (VBAS)



* Representatives of Panel & Sub-Committees come from HKHS, BD, HAD, HKIA, HKIE, HKIH, HKIS, HKGBC & HKAPMC

For implementation of the VBAS, the HKHS held two large scale seminars in May and June 2012 respectively for introducing details of the MBIS/MWIS and VBAS jointly with the BD to practitioners of the building related industries and encouraging the related building professionals to seek for registration as Registered Inspectors and VBAS Assessors. The two seminars attracted attendance of some 600 related building professionals.

HKHS held a number of the 1-day training sessions for registration of VBAS Assessors in the past months which were attended by a total of more than 500 related building professionals. Up to December, there were 394 qualified building professionals, inclusive of a considerable number of Registered Professional Housing Managers, registered on various lists of VBAS Assessors after completion of the training.

To motivate the owners in joining the scheme at an earlier stage, HKHS announced on 17 December 2012 an offer of Early Bird Discount of 50% for the Certification Fee on “first-come-first-serve” basis. Each of the four categories of buildings/estates (according to total number of domestic units) will be allocated a quota of 10 for this special offer without time limit.

For more details of the VBAS, please make reference to the leaflet and the website of the VBAS (<http://vbas.hkhs.com>). For enquiries, you may contact the Panel Secretariat on hotline 8108 0108 or by email to vbasenquiry@hkhs.com.

Voluntary Building Assessment Scheme Team
Hong Kong Housing Society
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