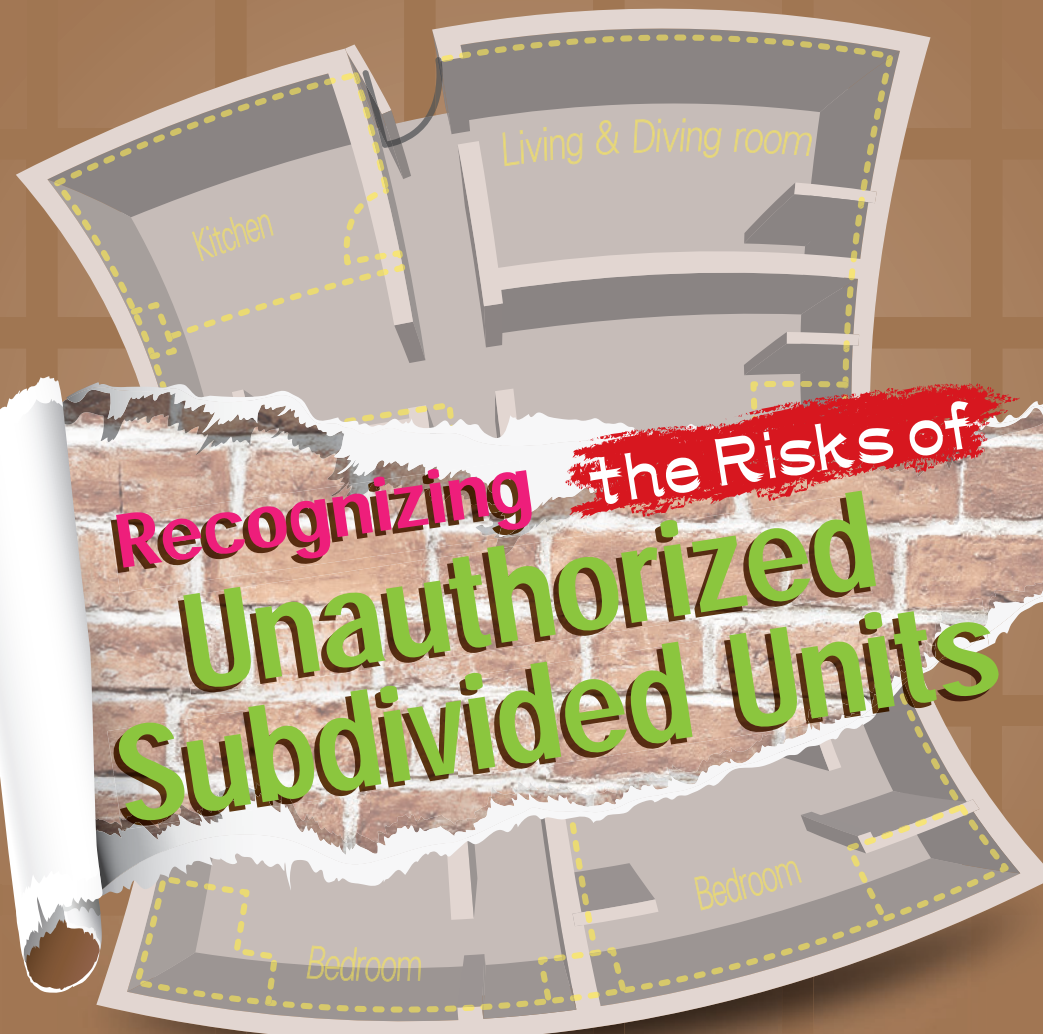


Recognizing the Risks of Unauthorized Subdivided Units



Subdivision of a flat into the commonly-known “subdivided units” generally refers to the subdivision of an original flat as shown on the approved plan of a building into two or more individual units. If the building works associated with the subdivision of a flat are carried out in contravention of the requirements of the Buildings Ordinance (BO), these unauthorized building works (UBWs) may affect the fire safety and structural safety of the building, and endanger the life or property of the occupants.

If you are an occupant of a “subdivided unit” or intend to rent a “subdivided unit”, you should recognize the irregularities found in a “subdivided unit” which contravene the BO to enable you to secure a safe and suitable unit to live in.



UBWs in “Subdivided Units”

1. Unauthorized subdivided domestic units in industrial buildings

- Subdivided units in industrial buildings should not be used for domestic purposes.



Subdivided units in industrial buildings are not suitable for domestic use

2. Irregularities affecting fire safety of the building and the means of escape thereof

- The exit staircase of the building is not accessible from the “subdivided units” (see Diagram 1).
- The means of escape is obstructed by doors / metal gates installed at the exit of the “subdivided units” (see Diagram 1).
- The existing fire rated doors are removed or replaced by doors not meeting the required fire resistance rating (see Diagram 1).
- The clear width of the internal corridor serving the “subdivided units” within the original flat is less than 0.75m.
- The clear headroom of exit routes is less than 2m.
- Doors / ventilation openings are formed in the enclosure of the exit staircase (see Diagram 1).
- Openings are made in the fire rated walls separating the units and the means of escape for ventilation or for installation of air-conditioners, exhaust fans, etc (see Diagram 1).
- Partition walls separating the “subdivided units” and the means of escape do not meet the required fire resistance rating.

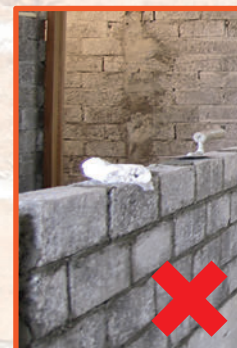
3. Irregularities affecting structural safety of buildings

- Excessive thickening of the floor slab of “subdivided units”
- Structural members (e.g. beams, columns or structural walls) are partially removed.
- Openings are formed in structural walls.
- Cracks appear at the junction of the partition walls and ceilings of the “subdivided units”.
- Cracks appear on the floor near the cantilevered balcony that may be caused by overloading.
- Signs of water seepage or concrete spalling appear at the ceiling of the flat below.

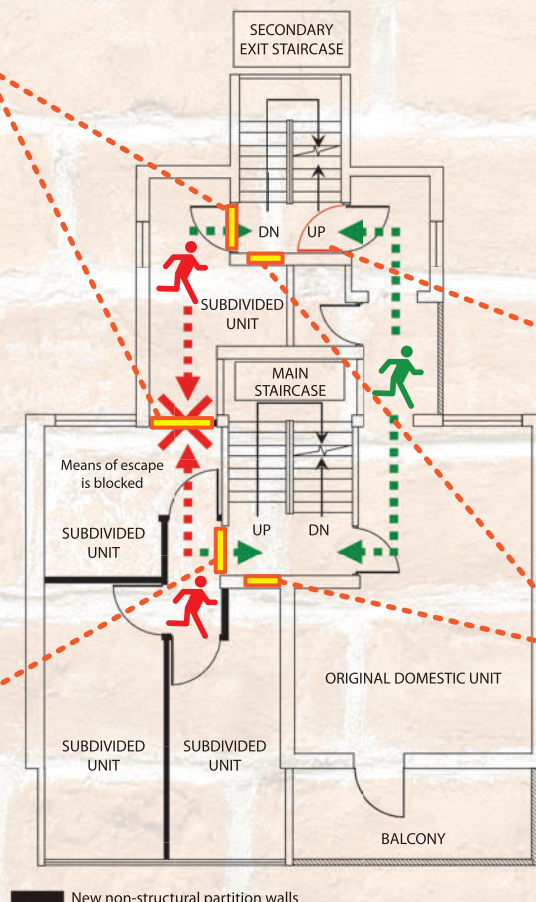


Thickening of the floor slab by laying solid screeding

(Diagram 1) UBWs Affecting the Safety of Means of Escape



Means of escape blocked by partition wall



Metal gate obstructing the means of escape



Existing fire rated doors removed or replaced by doors not meeting the required fire resistance rating



Opening formed in the staircase enclosure wall

4. Irregularities affecting environmental hygiene

- Toilets and kitchens are constructed on the balconies built over streets.
- Signs of leakage appear in the new/diverted drain pipes.
- Headroom of areas for habitation is less than 2.5m.



Water leakage in the additional and altered drain pipes

5. Irregularities affecting lighting and ventilation

- No window is provided in the “subdivided units” for natural lighting and ventilation.



No windows provided to the “subdivided units”

Buildings Department (BD) Determined to Combat Irregularities of Building Works associated with Subdivision of a Flat

When tackling irregularities of building works associated with subdivision of a flat, the BD, apart from carrying out investigations in response to reports on “subdivided units” from members of the public and taking appropriate enforcement action according to the current enforcement policy, has launched large scale operations since 1 April 2011 to inspect suspected “subdivided units” in target buildings and to ascertain whether the alteration and addition works involved are in compliance with the planning, design and construction requirements under the building regulations in respect of fire safety, structural safety and drainage works, in particular the impact on means of escape. The Department will take enforcement action against irregularities of building works so identified.

Reports on Irregularities of Building Works associated with Subdivision of a Flat

If you are an occupant of a “subdivided unit” or intend to rent a “subdivided unit” and discover the above-mentioned irregularities which contravene the Buildings Ordinance, you should immediately ask the owner to carry out rectification works and report the case to the Buildings Department through:

Telephone Hotline: 2626 1616 (Handled by "1823")
 Postal Address: G/F, Buildings Department Headquarters, North Tower, West Kowloon Government Offices, 11 Hoi Ting Road, Yau Ma Tei, Kowloon
 Email Address: enquiry@bd.gov.hk
 Electronic Reporting Form: <https://www.bd.gov.hk/en/about-us/contact-us/index.html>