

Design Requirements for Columbarium Facilities

There has been a rapid growth in the provision of columbarium facilities in Hong Kong in meeting the rising demand for niches. This has aroused public concern on the standard of design and construction of such facilities. This practice note sets out the design and construction requirements for columbarium facilities for the purpose of the Buildings Ordinance (BO) for public reference.

Erection of New Buildings for Use as a Columbarium

Means of Escape (MOE)

2. The MOE of a columbarium should comply with the requirements stipulated in Part B of the Code of Practice for Fire Safety in Buildings 2011 (FS Code). According to Item 5d of Table B1 of the FS Code, the occupancy factor for a columbarium is 2m² of usable floor area per person. For the avoidance of doubt, except the area for accommodation of niches and staircases, the prescribed width of exit routes including corridors of “balcony approach design” and the circulation areas such as lift lobbies etc. should be included in the calculation of usable floor area of a columbarium.

Fire Resisting Construction (FRC)

3. The FRC of a columbarium should comply with the requirements stipulated in Part C of the FS Code. In assessing the required fire resistance rating and fire compartment limitations, a columbarium is regarded as “Other Assembly Premises” as set out in Table C1 of the FS Code. Burner facilities to be provided for cremation of offerings are regarded as an area of special hazard which should be separated from the rest of the building by fire barriers as stipulated in Subsection C13 of the FS Code.

Means of Access for Firefighting and Rescue (MOA)

4. The MOA of a columbarium should comply with the requirements stipulated in Section 41A, 41B, 41C and 41D of the Building (Planning) Regulations and Part D of the FS Code. In the circumstances that an emergency vehicular access (EVA) will not be provided or when the EVA so provided cannot meet the standards as stipulated in the FS Code, an application for exemption/modification should be made on Form BA16 with full justification. Details are set out in PNAP APP-136.

/Provision

Provision of Sanitary Fitments

5. The provision of sanitary fitments in a columbarium should comply with the requirements listed in Table 1 below. The fitments should be provided in separate rooms exclusively for the use of male and female persons respectively.

	Requirements
(i) Assessment of population density	2m ² of usable floor area per person
(ii) Male to female ratio	1: 1.5
(iii) Provision for male persons	1 watercloset fitment and 1 urinal for every 150 persons or part thereof; 1 lavatory basin for every 300 persons or part thereof
(iv) Provision for female persons	1 watercloset fitment for every 75 persons or part thereof; 1 lavatory basin for every 300 persons or part thereof

Table 1 : Provision of Sanitary Fitments in Columbaria

Barrier Free Access

6. A columbarium is required to be planned for use by persons with a disability in accordance with Section 72 of the Building (Planning) Regulations and the Design Manual : Barrier Free Access 2008 (DM 2008). In alley between rows of niches commonly seen in columbarium design, adequate space in front of each row of niches should be allowed for the purposes of worship and offering sacrifices to ancestors, in addition to the minimum clearance required for the passageway for persons with a disability and for MOE.

Design Dead Load and Imposed Load

7. The design dead load and imposed load for a columbarium are set out in the Code of Practice for Dead and Imposed Loads 2011.

Conversion of Premises in Existing Buildings for Use as a Columbarium

8. Conversion of existing premises for use as a columbarium would likely constitute a material change in use of the building in the context of section 25(1) of the BO. The premises to be converted should comply with the design and construction requirements as set out in paragraphs 2 to 7 above. In addition, the following criteria should also be observed:

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- (i) Columbarium facilities should only be accommodated in non-domestic buildings ; and
- (ii) For columbarium facilities to be accommodated in existing industrial buildings, only conversion of the entire building to columbarium use is acceptable to the Fire Services Department from fire safety point of view. Partial conversion of such a building is considered undesirable as it may attract an excessively large number of persons who could be exposed to risks which they would neither be aware of nor prepared to face.

Compliance with Other Statutory Requirements and the Land Lease Restrictions

9. Apart from the BO, the use and operation of a columbarium, whether in a new development or in premises converted from an existing building, is also subject to the control of various other legislations on town planning, environmental hygiene, traffic control, fire safety etc. and the land lease restrictions under the jurisdiction of the respective Government departments. In addition to complying with the requirements of the BO, the applicant should also seek agreement / approval from the relevant departments and licensing authorities where applicable.

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