

SAFETY AND PRECAUTION

# FAULTY POWER SOURCE NO. 1 CAUSE OF FIRES

877 cases reported in the past six months

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**F**AULTY electrical sources are the No. 1 cause of fires in the country, with more than 5,300 cases recorded in the past three years.

Of the number, more than 1,000 buildings were razed as a result of short circuits, triggered either by overloading, faulty electrical appliances or wiring.

Statistics provided by the Fire and Rescue Department revealed that electrical sources surpassed incendiary fire as the No. 1 cause of fires, with a total of 877 cases reported in the past six months.

Fire and Rescue Department director-general Datuk Wan Mohd Nor Ibrahim urged the public to carry out periodic checks and upgrade internal wiring and installations, if their homes were more than 20 years old.

"This is when they need to be upgraded with new certified ca-

bles and wires. "It is also advisable to conduct inspections every 10 years," he said.

Penang recorded the highest number of fire cases caused by faulty electrical sources, with 144 cases, followed by Selangor (121) and Kuala Lumpur (112).

Penang Fire Investigation Division assistant director Mohamadul Ehsan Mohd Zain said overloading and illegal upgrading of wiring systems were among the main causes of fires in the state.

"Overloading happens when one overuses the socket.

"For example, when one point can generate only up to 200 volts, we use extensions to power up as many things as possible.

"This causes the power usage to jump up to 300 to 400 volts, surpassing the socket capacity.

"Illegal upgrading, especially

by squatters or illegal factories, is dangerous.

"In our investigations, we often find beaded wires... meaning a spark could have caused the fire.

"This also happens when they use low-quality wires, which are not Sirim-approved," he added.

Selangor Fire and Rescue Department operations assistant director Mohd Sani Harun said hiring unqualified personnel to carry out electrical work was also a factor that could trigger a short circuit.

"People tend to hire unqualified workers to cut cost and these people would carry out illegal 'modifications', which are dangerous," he said.

Plugging and unplugging constantly would also damage appliances and lead to electrical sparks, Sani said.

"When you do this often, the plugs become loose and as a result, electrical sparks are trig-



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**DATUK WAN MOHD NOR IBRAHIM**  
Fire and Rescue Department director-general

CAUSES OF FIRES

	2015	2016	2017 (until June)
Electrical sources	2,453	2,005	877
Cigarette butts	860	753	151
Fire sparks	304	229	87
Firecrackers	52	42	15
Mosquito coils, candles and joss sticks	126	98	46
Stoves	752	528	269
Incendiary fire	4,811	4,710	846
Arson	460	493	119
Chemical reaction	19	10	6
Matches	135	132	35

STATISTICS FROM THE FIRE AND RESCUE DEPARTMENT

	2015	2016	2017 (until June)
Number of deaths due to fire	153	107	73
Number of people injured due to fire	467	477	210
Losses due to fire	RM4.3 billion	RM2.8 billion	RM2 billion
Prevented losses	RM29.4 billion	RM35.8 billion	RM34.2 billion
Number of distress calls	82,600	92,307	40,343

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because people were unaware and unable to put them out at the initial stages.

"Most of the time, they only realise that their house or office is on fire when it's already too big to control.

"They also do not have any fire safety and precautionary mechanisms in place, such as smoke detectors, which can provide early warning," he said, adding that failing to switch off electrical equipment for extended periods of time could also lead to malfunctions and trigger a fire.

gered inside the plug head due to the gap that would have been created," he said.

City Fire and Rescue Department chief Khirudin Drahman said most major fires happened

## Lam Thye: Niosh supports improving fire safety standards

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (Niosh) has expressed support for the Fire and Rescue Department's proposal to improve fire safety standards in the country.

Niosh chairman Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye said the proposal was not only timely, but also essential considering the number of fire tragedies that had happened.

Citing the recent Grenfell Tower disaster in London, the United Kingdom, where an estimated 80 people died and more than 70 people were injured after the building was engulfed in fire, he said similar disasters could hap-

pen here as there were many old buildings in the country.

"We have been seeing so many disasters and we cannot afford to have any more tragedies that could result in the loss of lives.

"Niosh supports any effort to tighten and improve fire safety standards," he said, adding that the Fire and Rescue Department should be allowed to study and amend any legislation that could improve current laws.



**Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye**

He said any amendment to existing laws should also make it regulatory for all states to comply.

At the moment, the provisions for building safety against fire are under the Uniform Building By-Laws 2012, which has been accepted and gazetted only in Sabah, Selangor, Terengganu and Penang.

It was reported that Niosh was invited to be part of a special task force to coordinate safety aspects at all residential

tahfiz or religious schools.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, who is also home minister, said the Education Ministry should not be alone in looking into safety issues at these schools.

He said the task force was set up because of what happened at the Darul Quran Itifaqiyah religious school.

Niosh, together with several parties, including the Fire and Rescue Department and local authorities, have been instructed to conduct safety awareness campaigns as part of their task.

Lee was quoted as saying that Niosh would also conduct health and safety audits at all religious schools, including tahfiz centres to ensure they complied with occupational, health and safety standards.

He said Niosh would work with the Islamic Development Department, Fire and Rescue Department and the Education Ministry to address safety issues in religious schools and tahfiz centres.

The inspection of school buildings, he said, would begin as soon as the government had registered all religious schools and tahfiz centres.