

The Buck Stops Here: Meet the man responsible for your building's safety in UAE

Chief of Dubai Civil Defence and acting Director General of the UAE Civil Defence Department Major General Rashid Thani Al Matroushi

He is a hard man to meet, as he not only heads Dubai Civil Defense, but is also acting Director General of the UAE Civil Defense Department.

Still, he recently told a special conference on customer satisfaction to write down his mobile phone number and contact him whenever needed. He is willing to listen and answer.

Emirates 24|7 did just that and asked Major General Rashid Thani Al Matroushi a few burning questions about buildings material and safety violations in the wake of the recent Tamweel Tower fire, and the challenge for the year ahead.

Challenges for 2013

Unexpectedly, but not surprisingly, Maj Gen Al Matroushi cites one of the biggest challenges for the Civil Defense in 2013 as: "The multiplicity of languages, the diversity of cultures, and the variability of preventive behaviours.

"We are keen to find ways to communicate in different languages, through the use of indicative images and the use of short sentences aiming to create preventive awareness of preventive education in the most common languages," he says.



Chief of Dubai Civil Defence and acting Director General of the UAE Civil Defence Department Major General Rashid Thani Al Matroushi (SUPPLIED)

JLT's Tamweel Tower fire (November 2012)

"The fire in Tamweel Tower started outside the building and concentrated on the façade of the building, and that is why the sprinkler system did not work properly.

"The fire started outside the building, and the sprinkler system works inside the building.

"According to fire experts, the course of the fire included sporadic parts of the façade of the building, some apartments, the wings of the ornament installed on the top level and some cars parked under the building.

"This resulted in flying pieces of flame."

Overall high-rise building safety

“Civil Defense applies the finest methods of fire protection inside buildings.

“Buildings are electronically linked to the operation room of Civil Defense through a 24|7 system, which permanently oversees the safety systems, in addition to the automatic extinguisher, warning system and direct electronic report of any incident, without the need for human contact.”

Use of fire retardant material for exterior of high-rise buildings

(On September 1, 2012, amendments were made to the UAE Fire and Life Safety Code of Practice, specifying new requirements for classification, design, material requirements, installation, inspection, maintenance and management of the exterior construction material)

“The challenge is the compliance of construction companies with these regulations.

“Depending on the seriousness of the violation, Civil Defense applies a system of fining violators, assuring that the violation is corrected.

"Civil Defense has applied preventive measures to all buildings and institutions since its inception in 1976.

"These measures are developed alongside the construction and architectural developments, and the requirements of the growth of the nation, even before the issuance of the Code.

"In case there are buildings where the material used is in violation with prevention and a safety measure, Civil Defense applies solutions suited for every building in Dubai, assuring that the required measures are taken to guarantee safety in the building."

"In Dubai inspection teams have carried out those procedures since 2009.

“They have identified those violations and taken legal action against them, starting by putting an end to the activity and even referring to the public prosecutor, depending on the nature of the threat and the response of landlords, and their rights according to the procedures of Civil Defense."

Most common building safety violations

"Illegal storage, making structural changes without obtaining the approval of Civil Defense and the lack of maintenance of fire and rescue equipment and systems.

“In total there are 1,500 violations identified on the Federal level and for each violation the fine to be imposed is determined.”

Emirates 24/7

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