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## A district of death traps

By GARMEN CHAN

At least one-third of the buildings in a district in Tsun Wan have been found to contain fire hazards, a survey by the local district office has revealed.

The survey of two old tenement areas in the town covered 254 buildings. It showed that 77 contained features which were rated as fire hazards.

Among the dangers were obstructed fire escapes, iron gates which failed to meet regulations and improper emergency service installations.

Now the Tsun Wan District Board has asked its Environmental Improvement Committee to make a detailed study of fire hazards throughout the district.

One of the board's chief worries is that residents are loath to report hazards.

The local district office and the Fire Services Department have both received fewer fire complaints in re-

cent years.

The Tsun Wan District Commissioner, Mr Hamish MacLeod, yesterday appealed to residents to co-operate with fire officials by reporting any potential hazards.

He said the department can carry out only limited inspections because of a manpower shortage.

"If the public reported all fire hazards they see, I am sure the Fire Services Department would receive 10 times more complaints," he told a board meeting.

The Assistant District Officer (Tsun Wan East), Mr Parrish Ng, said: "From the survey, we believe many buildings still have fire hazard problems. But the number of complaints showed otherwise."

He said his office had handled fewer than 10 fire complaints during the past two years, although complaints in other areas — such as building management — had increased.

Before yesterday's meeting, Mr MacLeod accompanied area committee members on a tour of selected buildings in Tsun Wan town centre.

They checked fire escapes in three buildings in Chuen Lung Road.

The majority of the buildings in the area were built in the 1960s and are six storeys high.

They found that in two of the buildings fire escapes on the lower floors were completely blocked. A restaurant was using the escapes as a store area.

In one case, iron gates had been erected at both ends of the escape corridor and the visitors found they were blocked by large sacks.

In another building, the fire escape routes were being used as a washing-up area by a restaurant.

The stairs were awash with water and covered by the remains of food, making them very difficult to negotiate.