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A Study on Floor and Staircases Safety in Old Primary School: Case Study - Malacca

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Abstract

The school is second only to the home in importance to a child’s development. Accidents occur at school when teachers and other staff do not take proper precautions towards kids who are dealing with potentially dangerous activity. Schools that are appropriately designed, constructed, and maintained can reduce operations and maintenance costs and furthermore can prevent accidents. Unfortunately, most of schools building finishes and staircases are in very poor condition which could lead to accidents. Many of the primary school in use today across the country are housed in buildings more than 30 years old. How safe is the building? Are the buildings safe enough to be able to withstand and accommodate schoolchildren daily activities? These have connection to the building finishes and staircases which should be durable and maintainable so that it would not become hazardous to schoolchildren and the school community. Therefore, it is seen that the safety of the schoolchildren and the community lies in the safety of the building itself. This research aims to study on the safety of schools looking particularly on the flooring finishes as well as the staircases features as these 2 elements are seen to be the most potential location for accidents to happen. Case study was carried out in 5 primary schools in Malacca which was built in the year 1950’s. Building audit and questionnaire were carried out to identify causes of accidents and the location where accidents took place. The outcome of this research shows that most of the accidents happen in the classrooms due to bad condition of flooring which is mainly cement rendered. This research hopes to facilitate the school management and its community to prevent future accidents caused by faulty flooring finishes as well as staircases features.

Keywords: accidents, building finishes, safety building, schoolchildren, staircase, Malaysia

Introduction

Children spend a significant portion of their time in schools, more than in any other environment than their homes. Schools play an important role in our education system because it provides place for us to produce a lot of quality and enthusiasm schoolchildren to contribute towards nation developments. Therefore it is important that the education and the learning environment of our children must be safe and health-protective.

Unfortunately, school safety is a complex issue nowadays. Within these past few years, images of schools as a safe place have been replaced by schools accidents and a generation of schoolchildren living in fear, even teachers, all have less than happy memories of school days nowadays. The school community’s safety is under threatened because of the unsafe school building which could lead to a catastrophic loss.

This was proven when a school teacher died after falling from a decayed plywood floor of a two-storey school block in an incident occurred at SJK (C) Keat Hwa, Alor Star (The Star Publication, 2005). It was later identified that the upper floor that was made of thick plywood had been eaten by white ants. Hence, creating safe schools are the responsibility and commitments of the entire community.

Safety is very important to building users; it is because the unsafe building may lead to injuries and fatalities. Safety is one of the most important terms used in safety and health profession. According to Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary, safety can be defined as:-

a) The condition of being safe; freedom from exposure to danger.

b) Freedom from harm, injury, or risk; no longer being threatened by danger or injury.

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