

Enhancing Disaster Preparedness

MRA adopts an innovative approach to Fire Drill

Custom House, Mer Rouge, Port-Louis. The **Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA)** conducted an innovative “*Simulation Fire Drill Exercise*” at the Custom House Mer Rouge, in Port-Louis, on Friday, 10th of November 2023. Coordinated by the Human Resources and Training Department of the MRA, this ground-breaking approach focused on the live evacuation of a few trapped staff members from the building. This Simulation Fire Drill Exercise aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of emergency response procedures and assessing the coordination between MRA and the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Services (MFRS).



Creating a realistic scenario

In his keynote speech after the Simulation Fire Drill Exercise, Mr. Sudhamo Lal, Director-General of MRA explained that the security of the staff is of utmost priority. MRA recognizes the importance of maintaining a culture of safety within the organization. Every year, MRA conducts Fire Drills, as a disaster preparedness activity, to test its facilities in place and familiarise its employees with evacuation procedures.

“Today's Simulation Fire Drill exercise showcased our dedication to equipping all employees with the necessary knowledge and skills to handle emergency situations effectively”, Mr. Lal added.



For his part, Mr. Nemraj Dayal, Principal, MRA Training Academy, affirmed that the *“Simulation Fire Drill Exercise”* has provided participants with a realistic experience that closely resembles an actual fire emergency. At the MRA, we prioritize the importance of continuous learning and improvement in fire safety protocols, he concluded.

Mr. Naushad Ally Elaheebocus, Station Fire Officer, Special Operations Division, MFRS pointed out that the simulation exercise in a fire drill should accurately reflect real-life situations. It is crucial for ensuring that people are prepared to respond effectively in case of a real fire emergency. This requires realistic scenarios, proper training, and the use of appropriate equipment in real conditions. Such practices can significantly improve the effectiveness of fire drills and enhance overall safety preparedness of MRA. This hands-on experience allowed MRA officer's to become familiar with evacuation procedures, and other essential fire safety protocols.





Mr. Mohit Hemraj, Chief Inspector, National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Centre, commended MRA for ensuring clear and effective communication with all participants during the simulation exercise.

However, he pointed out that security guards should also be included in emergency response procedures to provide valuable support to both staff and participants during the exercise. Their involvement can enhance the overall preparedness and effectiveness of the fire drill,

making it an essential component of the simulation exercise.

Prompt response and logistical expertise

During the “*Simulation Fire Drill Exercise*”, MFRS replicated a real-life emergency situation by simulating an artificial fire on a specific floor in the Custom House. To ensure the utmost safety, the MFRS actively participated in the *Simulation Fire Drill Exercise*, with representatives of the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Centre (NDRRMC) acting as observers.

Assessing effectiveness and identifying improvements



During the “*Simulation Fire Drill Exercise*”, officers from the MFRS showcased their logistical expertise by promptly arriving at the scene with fire trucks. They then executed a well-coordinated evacuation plan, rescuing a few designated staff members from the simulated fire floor.

At around 10.30 a.m. the artificial fire was contained and the fire brigade evacuated three MRA staff from that building. They all received first aid promptly.

A debriefing session was carried out with a view to assessing the effectiveness of the evacuation strategies, detecting potential bottlenecks, and identifying areas for improvement for MRA.



Fostering a culture of safety at work

In her debriefing address, Mrs. Shyamili Ramgolam Jheelan, Technical Officer, Safety and Health at the MRA elucidated that *“today’s event marks a significant milestone for the MRA as we delve into uncharted territory with our first-ever simulation fire drill.”*

This initiative is a crucial component of our Disaster Preparedness Strategy and the exceptional performance as Fire Wardens and First Aiders has not gone unnoticed, Mrs Ramgolam said. This event, according to her, would not have been possible without the unwavering commitment and support of the management of MRA. The leadership of the Director-General has been instrumental in orchestrating today’s exercise, she underlined.





By conducting realistic fire drills, MRA aims to foster a sense of preparedness among staff members and instill confidence in its ability to respond appropriately during emergencies. This event demonstrated the commitment of MRA in ensuring the safety and well-being of the staff and the public, with the support and collaboration of the relevant stakeholders.