

# Brazilian nightclub inferno and the critical imperative of best practice building regulation and regulatory compliance

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The diabolical carnage that characterised the human inferno at Kiss nightclub in Santa Maria night club sends shivers down one's spine. 245 students predominantly aged between 18 and 20 albeit with a sprinkling of minors died in the inferno.

The fire broke out at about 2.30 am allegedly a flare was let off by a band member, a Spark hit the inflammable foam ceiling and the fire spread with remarkable speed. Most of the youths died from inhaling toxic fumes and severe burns. There were a litany of calamities and system failures, by all accounts there were minimal exits and egress doors. When the panic crowd tried to stampede out of the premises security guards closed some of the doors least patrons left without paying. Patrons confused bathrooms with exit doors as they gravitated towards areas that were lit. There was no sprinkler system and a paucity of exit signs.

It is also alleged that the number of revellers in the club vastly exceeded the permissible limit. Net effect carnage. Lives lost, families wrecked aspirations and human potential obliterated-shocking, shocking.



The maelstrom brings into focus once again building and fire regulations and the paramouncy of sound building regulations, inspection and enforcement regimes. It would be sanctimonious to construe the tragedy as an affair peculiar to Brazil. Fires in places of public entertainment will wreak terrible havoc in any environment where regulations are lax or out-dated, where inspectors and law enforcers fail to ensure that fire regulations are adhered to and where compliance regimes are token. Enlightened fire control is holistic it requires the participation of enlightened regulators, diligent enforcement

officers and ethical entrepreneurs and land owners and rigour adherence to fire regulations. It's not about passing the buck. What happened in Brazil is system failure.

Further anything short of the mandating of sprinklers is always going to be tokenism. Water puts fires out, smoke detection systems trigger sprinklers and well lit exit signs pointing to egress routes let people vacate. The solution is multifaceted and must be holistic. And it ill behoves any regulator, anywhere on the planet, to think that what has occurred is a phenomena peculiar to Brazil. The phenomena will occur where the economic imperative of cheap construction, minimal adherence to fire regulations and insipid fire controls presents itself. So one of the take outs of this tragedy must be for all jurisdictions to reflect and look at their own backyards and ponder the question of are we up to scratch and if not what the hell are we going to do about it?

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