

Another Crowd Disaster: Shanghai New Year Stampede 2015 and Lan Kwai Fong Disaster 1993

W.K. Chow JP FHKEng and Edgar C.L. Pang

Research Centre for Fire Engineering, Department of Building Services Engineering

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong, China

The Shanghai New Year Stampede [1-3] in 2015 recalled the memory of a local disaster 22 years ago – Lan Kwai Fong Disaster [4,5] in 1993, both occurred on New Year’s Eve. These two disasters are compared based on the location, crowd characteristics and time frame concerned.

1. Physical characteristics of the location

The recent disaster in Shanghai was reported [1] to happen on an 8 m wide stairway with 17 steps which leads to an elevated viewing platform at Chen Yi Square. It is supposed to be used for leisure but there is no report on the service conditions of the steps and the square. A countdown event was held [2,3] at the far end of another square.

The Lan Kwai Fong tragedy in Hong Kong in 1993 happened [4] at the area bounded by D’Aguilar Street and Lan Kwai Fong and buildings alongside. The incident happened in the street of 17 m long, 5.5 m wide and 1:8.86 tilted with 1.5 m and 1.4 m wide stepped pavements on two sides [4]. There were many bars, restaurants and nightclubs and the service conditions of the pavement surface and road were found to be slippery [4]. A “pop concert” with a stage on the road was held with a license for an attendance of 1,000.

2. Age range, physical and mental states of the crowds

In the Shanghai disaster, an estimated number [1,2] of 100,000 to 300,000 people gathered for the new year celebration were controlled by only 500 policemen. In this incident, 36 were killed and 47 injured. The death toll was mainly female in the age range of 12 to 36. As there is no formal report released yet, details on the nature of the crowd, the age and gender are unknown.

In the Lan Kwai Fong tragedy where 21 were killed and 67 injured, the estimated crowd [5] of 15,000 to 20,000 people were controlled by 118 policemen. The age range [4] of the death toll was from 15 to 30 in which one-third were female, only 6 persons were over 20. Even though the crowd was in high mood, 20 killed were not drunken [5].

3. Time frames of the incidents

Time frames of the two disasters are compared based on the information from the news [3] and government report [5].

Shanghai New Year Stampede based on the information reported [3]:

- 23:30 pm People started to fall on the stairway near the countdown show.
- 23:35 pm Stampede occurred.
- 23:55 pm Additional police arrived to rescue.

Lan Kwai Fong Disaster based on the information from the final investigation report [5]:

- 00:00 am After countdown, many people went down along D'Aguiar Street for celebration and crowded at the intersection of the cross-road (Lan Kwai Fong and Wing Wah Lane) for going downward. Some people were escaping the celebration sprays.
- 00:01am First call for help received by Fire Services Department (FSD).
- 00:08 am Second call received by FSD.
- 00:11 am Additional help arrived.

References

1. "Crowds mourn stampede victims", China Daily Hong Kong Edition, 2 January 2015.
2. "Police admit misjudging crowd", South China Morning Post, 2 January 2015.
3. "New year countdown stampede claims 36", The Standard, 2 January 2015.
4. Syed Kemal Shah Bokhary, The Lan Kwai Fong Disaster on January 1, 1993: Interim Report, Government Printer, 18 January 1993.
5. Syed Kemal Shah Bokhary, The Lan Kwai Fong Disaster on January 1, 1993: Final Report, Government Printer, 23 February 1993.