

Responsible for administering the  
Entertainment Special Effects  
Ordinance (Cap.560)

Regulatory control on the supply, use, conveyance and storage of special effects materials used in entertainment programmes



Culture, Sports and  
Tourism Bureau

## Special Effects Licensing Section (SELS) Q&A

### Q: What are the main duties of SELS ?

- A:
- Licensing of special effects operators
  - Approving and registering pyrotechnic special effects materials
  - Exercising regulatory control on the supply, use, conveyance and storage of pyrotechnic special effects materials
  - Issuing permits for the discharge of special effects materials
  - Approving and issuing codes of practice
  - Carrying out surveillance inspection to ensure compliance with the regulatory requirements

### Q: What are Special Effects Materials (SEMs) ?

A: SEMs are materials used to produce special effects for entertainment programmes. SEMs are classified into pyrotechnic special effects materials (PSEMs) and non-pyrotechnic special effects materials (non-PSEMs). PSEMs are of explosives in nature, which are regulated by the Entertainment Special Effects Ordinance after approval and registration, such as bullet hit, gerb, flash powder, etc. Non-PSEMs are dangerous goods without explosive contents such as liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), gasoline, compressed carbon dioxide, etc. Please refer to the Schedule of the Entertainment Special Effects Materials List Regulation (Cap.560C)\* for details.

### Q: What are the differences between pyrotechnics and fireworks in Hong Kong ?

A: The differences can be described in the following aspects:

	Pyrotechnics	Fireworks
Use	Mainly used in movies, TV shows, stage performances and other entertainment programmes	Mainly used in large scale celebration events such as New Year's Eve Count down, Chinese New Year, National Day, etc.
Effect	Materials dissipate in the air after discharge, such as effects of sparkle, flame, smoke, etc.	Materials like aerial shells burst in the air after discharge to produce a variety of patterns
Ordinance	Entertainment Special Effects Ordinance (Cap.560)	Dangerous Goods Ordinance (Cap.295)
Regulatory authority	Cultural and Creative Industries Development Agency	Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau (on land) Marine Department (at sea)

### Q: What kind of venue is suitable for discharging SEMs ?

A: A suitable venue for discharging SEMs should comply with the following requirements: venue with good ventilation and escape access, no storage of dangerous goods in the vicinity, sufficient clearance height and safety distance (which depend on which types of SEMs are discharged), and permission from the owner/person-in-charge of the venue.

**In order to avoid breaking the law, the relevant requirements of the Entertainment Special Effects Ordinance should be understood before discharge of any special effects materials !**

### Q: What are the classifications of discharge permits ?

A: Discharge permits are classified into Stream A and Stream B according to the types of entertainment programmes. In general, films, commercials and television programmes are classified as Stream A whereas literary, dramatic, musical and artistic works and stage performances are classified as Stream B.

When classifying a discharge permit, SELS considers the following aspects:

- Presence of audience and the distance between the audience and the special effects scenes
- SEMs to be discharged
- Venue/premises for discharging SEMs and its surroundings
- Performers' and stunt persons' positions, and the content of their performances



Stream A



Stream B

### Q: In an entertainment programme, should the person-in-charge have a discharge permit when discharging any SEMs?

A: If an entertainment programme involves the use of PSEMs or LPG, the person-in-charge must have a discharge permit, irrespective of the quantity of such materials to be used. For the use of non-PSEMs (other than LPG) with a quantity not exceeding the exemption quantity specified in Schedule 4 of the Entertainment Special Effects (General) Regulation\*, on condition that these non-PSEMs are not used in conjunction with or ignited by any PSEMs or LPG, and they are in compliance with the requirements of the code of practice promulgated by the Entertainment Special Effects Licensing Authority, a discharge permit is not required. Nevertheless, for safety reasons, a qualified special effects operator should be employed for discharge of SEMs.

### Q: How to find special effects production companies in Hong Kong?

A: A directory of special effects production companies can be found at the following URL:  
[https://fso.ccidahk.gov.hk/en/production\\_directory/list.php?business\[\]=17](https://fso.ccidahk.gov.hk/en/production_directory/list.php?business[]=17)

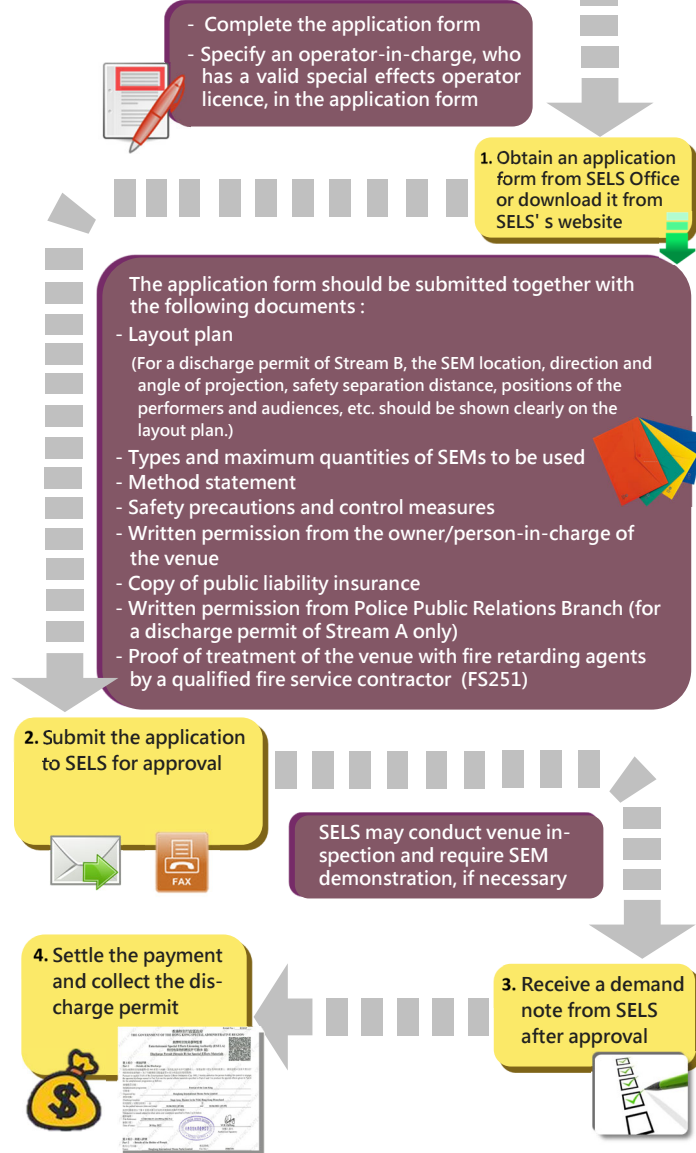
### Q: How long does it take for SELS to process a discharge permit application?

A: In general, upon receipt of the necessary information, it takes about 3 to 13 working days for SELS to process an application for a discharge permit of Stream A, and about 5 to 13 working days for a discharge permit of Stream B. The actual time required depends on the level of risk and complication of the special effects scenes.

Note:  
\* <https://www.elegislation.gov.hk/>

**Unless otherwise exempted by regulations, no person shall discharge; or cause or permit to be discharged, any special effects materials without a discharge permit. An offender is liable to a maximum fine of \$100,000 and imprisonment for 6 months on a first conviction.**

## Application procedure of a discharge permit



This information provided in this leaflet is for reference only. Whilst Cultural and Creative Industries Development Agency endeavours to ensure the accuracy of the information, Cultural and Creative Industries Development Agency shall not be held responsible for any errors or omissions.

Special Effects Licensing Section, Cultural and Creative  
Industries Development Agency

Address: 39/F, Revenue Tower, 5 Gloucester Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong

Tel: 2594 0465 Fax: 3101 0929

E-mail: [esela@ccidahk.gov.hk](mailto:esela@ccidahk.gov.hk) Website: <https://www.esela.ccidahk.gov.hk/>