

NARROW ALLEYS PACKED WITH PEOPLE AND MOTORBIKES: TAMSUI FIRE DEPT. BLACKLISTS SHUI-YUAN STREET

A recent investigation of fire safety in the community around Tamsui Campus has highlighted some disturbing signs. The investigation conducted by the fire department of Tamsui, Taipei County indicates that Section 2 of Shui-yuan Street is considered a hindrance to the fire rescue service, should a fire breakout in that area. The Construction Section of Tamsui Township is making an effort to paint red lines as part of their measures to prevent the illegal parking of motorbikes in that area. Illegally parked motorbikes in narrow roads and alleys are believed to be the cause of the tragic fire in Luchou a month ago.

There are at least more than a thousand people residing along Shui-yuan Street, which makes it one of the most densely populated places in Tamsui. The traffic on that street was relatively smooth last academic semester, when most red lines on the road were still visible. However, the traffic conditions have deteriorated since those red lines have become obscured by new asphalt that was laid down over them during the summer vacation. Furthermore, since the parking lot on the Wuhu Hill was converted into office space, students have parked their cars and motorbikes on Shuiyuan Street instead for convenience, despite the fact that the university has set up nearly a thousand parking spaces for them elsewhere. Both factors have contributed further to the chaos and threat of danger in those already very narrow streets and alleys. It is very difficult for a van to travel through them. Mr. Luo from the rescue team of Tamsui Fire Department points out that a van is about one meter wide, yet a fire engine can reach up to 2.5 meters wide. Since a fire engine requires a road that is up to 4 meters wide to drive on safely, Shuiyuan Street apparently fails to be suitable for fire rescue. Another member of the rescue team, Jia Hsueh-jun suggests that all the fire and safety related agencies should immediately paint the red lines to prevent any future disasters.

The pictures of fire victims jumping out of the burning building in Luchou are still fresh in the memory of most people as the incident was only a month ago. Lee Kun-charng, a freshman in Mechanical Engineering who lives on Shuiyuan Street, has not forgotten what he saw and thus expresses his concern that even though he could understand the need of his fellow students to park their cars or motorbikes, he wonders what would happen should there be a fire in this area and standard-size fire engines were unable to approach the fire scene.

Yang Mong-gang, a senior student from the Banking and Finance Department, also has noticed the deterioration of the parking on Shui-yuan Street compared with that of last semester. He believes the number of motorbikes has increased by at least 500 more this year. Like his fellow student, Lee Kun-charng, he is also concerned about the obstruction of these motorbikes to fire engine access.

However, the Chief of the Traffic Division of Tamsui Police Station points out that as there are no red lines in this area, police are unable to apply any punitive measures. In light of this fact and future fire hazard, Chang Hsiang-kun from the Construction Section of Tamsui Township, states that they will ensure painting red lines in all necessary areas in early course.

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