

LCQ12: Occupational safety for repair and maintenance work for installations on external walls of buildings

Following is a question by the Hon Luk Chung-hung and a written reply by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong, in the Legislative Council today (January 30):

Question:

Some trade union representatives have relayed to me that due to design deficiencies of the external walls of over 150 buildings completed between 2003 and 2016, strong and stable truss-out bamboo scaffolds cannot be erected onto such external walls. As a result, it is difficult for workers to carry out repair and maintenance work for installations on such external walls and the workers' occupational safety is jeopardised. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) Whether it will enhance the contents on how to erect strong and stable truss-out bamboo scaffolds in the Code of Practice for Bamboo Scaffolding Safety, including how workers can fasten scaffolds onto the external walls using three expansion anchor bolts in a situation where there is not enough space to do so or where the external walls are made of materials which cannot provide the necessary support; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) Whether it will comprehensively update the Code of Practice for Safe Use and Operation of Suspended Working Platforms to set out clearly (i) the uses of the suspended working platforms (e.g. whether, in addition to carrying workers, heavy weights can be carried on the platform at the same time), and (ii) the circumstances under which the employers' provision of a suspended working platform cannot be regarded as their having provided a safe means of access for workers; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) Given that currently there are many buildings with deficiencies in the designs of their external walls, making it difficult for workers to carry out repair and maintenance work for installations on their external walls, of the authorities' remedial measures to ensure the occupational safety of such workers; and

(4) Whether it will, by drawing reference from the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations of the United Kingdom, enact legislation to stipulate that developers, contractors, and the relevant professionals must take into account the needs of future repair and maintenance work for installations on external walls when designing new buildings, so as to ensure that the risk of the relevant work is reduced to a minimum; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government is highly concerned about work-at-height safety (including work carried out at external walls of buildings). The Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance (Cap. 509), the Factories and Industrial Undertakings Ordinance (Cap. 59) and their subsidiary regulations, administered by the Labour Department (LD), stipulate the safety requirements for work-at-height, including erecting safe working platforms and equipping them with secure fences, providing safe access and egress, and furnishing workers with suitable fall arresting devices when necessary. Before commencing work, duty-holders shall conduct task-specific risk assessment with due regard to site environment. The safe working methods so formulated should take into account the concerned working environment and risks, so as to safeguard workers' safety at work.

In consultation with the Development Bureau and the Buildings Department (BD), a consolidated reply is provided as follows:

(1) to (3) In order to help contractors/employers understand and comply with the legal requirements with regard to work-at-height, LD has published various Codes of Practice (CoP)/Guidelines, which set out practical operation requirements and safety measures in respect of external wall work safety in general working environment and conditions.

As the designs of external walls of buildings vary, contractors/employers have the duty to conduct task-specific risk assessment before commencing repair and maintenance works at external walls, including taking the actual working environment and conditions (such as the uniqueness of building design) into consideration. Based on the risk assessment results, contractors/employers should formulate appropriate safe working methods, procedures and necessary safety measures, including the provision of suitable working platforms and fall arresting devices for the workers and ensuring their proper use, so as to comply with statutory work safety requirements. When necessary, they should seek professional advice.

LD is however aware that the external wall designs of some residential buildings constructed in recent years are not conducive to the adoption of common work methods for repair works and replacement of facilities, that involve work at height, at external walls of buildings. In view of this, LD will work with relevant professionals to study and analyse the external wall designs of these buildings and identify possible problems encountered when common work methods are used to conduct external wall works. Subject to the study findings, LD will make recommendations relating to these problems. LD will commence the work as soon as possible.

(4) BD reviews the subsidiary legislation under the Buildings Ordinance (Cap. 123) from time to time and proposes suitable amendments as necessary with a view to keeping abreast of latest building technology advancement and responding to the industry's requests. Specifically, upon reviewing the Building (Construction) Regulations (B(C)R) (Cap. 123B), BD proposes

introduction of requirements mandating the provision of adequate safety facilities in the design of new buildings to facilitate future repair and maintenance works at external walls. Apart from the relevant proposed amendment, BD also proposes that the provisions of B(C)R be comprehensively transformed into performance-based instead of prescribing a set of standards applicable to all buildings so as to allow greater flexibility in building design thus catering for the rapid building technology advancements. Along this direction, when the amended regulations commence operation, BD will require Authorized Persons to provide information on the facilities for external repair of buildings, such as working platforms that conform to occupational safety and health legislation, etc. Such facilities must be specified on the building plans for consideration and approval by BD. To complement the proposed amended regulations, BD has completed a draft code of practice on design for safety for external maintenance and is now consulting the building industry following the established procedures.

Guangdong and local Chiu Chow opera troupes to perform in March and April

The Raoping Chiu Chow Opera Troupe of Guangdong will collaborate with the Sun Hon Kwong Chiu Chow Opera Troupe for three performances in March and April. Details of the performances are as follows:

"A Comedy of Betrothals"

March 30 (Saturday), 7.30pm

Auditorium, Ko Shan Theatre New Wing

"Qin Xianglian"

March 31 (Sunday), 7.30pm

Theatre, Sheung Wan Civic Centre

"Cheng Ying Saves the Orphan of Zhao"

April 1 (Monday), 7.30pm

Theatre, Sheung Wan Civic Centre

The main cast from the Raoping Chiu Chow Opera Troupe of Guangdong includes Wang Guojun, Yu Yuyun, Yang Rongyu, Huang Chengzhong, Li Muming, Shen Mingtong, Shen Shaojun and Shen Xinge.

Chiu Chow opera is performed in the Chiu Chow dialect and is one of the principal Chinese operatic genres. The genre's repertory origins lie in South China's operatic plays of the Song and Yuan periods, and are characterised by vivid, affable dialogue and lyrics, making the performances highly accessible and enjoyable.

Founded in 1956, the Raoping Chiu Chow Opera Troupe of Guangdong has built up a repertoire of distinctly colourful opera works, in the form of both new productions and adaptations. Most works, with new ideas merged, are performed by budding young actors. The troupe is committed to promoting the heritage and development of the art of Chiu Chow opera.

The Sun Hon Kwong Chiu Chow Opera Troupe, formerly the Hon Kwong Chiu Chow Opera Troupe, was founded in 1959 and turned professional in 1987. Its members consist of virtuosi in Chiu Chow opera in Hong Kong, as well as young artists groomed in recent years. The troupe has maintained close contacts with other troupes in the Mainland and often collaborates with them in giving joint performances. The artistic exchanges are conducive to the development of the genre.

The above-mentioned performances are presented by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, with Chinese surtitles while English synopsis will be available upon request. Tickets priced at \$140, \$180 and \$220 are now available at URB TIX (www.urbtix.hk). For telephone credit card bookings, please call 2111 5999. For programme enquiries and concessionary schemes, please call 2268 7325 or visit www.lcsd.gov.hk/CE/CulturalService/Programme/en/chinese_opera/programs_721.html.

Missing woman in Hung Hom located

A woman who went missing in Hung Hom has been located.

Lee Lau Sik-fun, aged 54, went missing after she left a care home in Chi Kiang Street on January 28 morning. Staff of the care home made a report to Police on the same day.

The woman returned to the care home in the small hours today (January 30). She sustained no injuries and was sent to Queen Elizabeth Hospital for examination. No suspicious circumstances were detected.

Key statistics on service demand of A&E Departments and occupancy rates in

public hospitals

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

During the winter surge, the Hospital Authority is closely monitoring the service demand of Accident and Emergency Departments and the occupancy rate in public hospitals. Key service statistics are being issued daily for public information. Details are in the appended table.

Special traffic arrangements for race meeting in Happy Valley

Special traffic arrangements will be implemented in Happy Valley today (January 30). The arrangements will come into effect one and a half hours before the start of the first race and will last until the crowds have dispersed after the race meeting.

A. Traffic arrangements before the commencement of the first race

1. Road closure

Southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Queen's Road East and the up-ramp outside Hong Kong Jockey Club (HKJC) will be closed except for vehicles heading for Aberdeen Tunnel.

2. Traffic diversions

- Southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Village Road and the up-ramp outside HKJC will be re-routed one way northbound;
- Vehicles from eastbound Queen's Road East heading for Wan Chai and Happy Valley will be diverted to turn left to Morrison Hill Road;
- Traffic along southbound Morrison Hill Road heading for Happy Valley will be diverted via Sports Road and Wong Nai Chung Road;
- Traffic along Queen's Road East cannot turn right to Wong Nai Chung Road except for vehicles heading to Aberdeen Tunnel;
- Traffic from Cross Harbour Tunnel heading for Queen's Road East will be diverted via the down-ramp leading from southbound Canal Road flyover to Morrison Hill Road to turn right at the junction of Wong Nai Chung Road and Queen's Road East; and
- Traffic from Cross Harbour Tunnel heading for Happy Valley or Racecourse will be diverted via the down-ramp leading from southbound Canal Road flyover to Canal Road East, southbound Morrison Hill Road, Sports Road and Wong Nai Chung Road.

B. Traffic arrangements before the conclusion of race meeting

1. Road closure

The following roads will be closed from 35 minutes before the start of the last race:

- The up-ramp on Wong Nai Chung Road outside HKJC leading to Aberdeen Tunnel;
- Southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Queen's Road East and the up-ramp leading to Aberdeen Tunnel;
- Southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Village Road and the Public Stands of HKJC;
- Westbound Leighton Road between Wong Nai Chung Road and Canal Road East; and
- Southbound Morrison Hill Road between Leighton Road and Queen's Road East.

In addition, southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between the up-ramp leading to Aberdeen Tunnel and the Public Stands of HKJC will be closed from about 10 minutes before the start of the last race.

2. Traffic diversions

The following traffic arrangements will be implemented from 35 minutes before the start of the last race:

- Eastbound Queen's Road East at its junction with Morrison Hill Road will be reduced to one-lane traffic heading for northbound Canal Road flyover;
- Vehicles from Cross Harbour Tunnel heading for Wan Chai will be diverted via the down-ramp leading from Canal Road East, U-turn slip road beneath Canal Road flyover, Canal Road West and Hennessy Road;
- Vehicles from Cross Harbour Tunnel heading for Happy Valley will be diverted via the down-ramp leading from Canal Road East, eastbound Leighton Road and Wong Nai Chung Road;
- Traffic on southbound Morrison Hill Road will be diverted to turn left to eastbound Leighton Road;
- Traffic along southbound Morrison Hill Road heading for Happy Valley will be diverted via eastbound Leighton Road and Wong Nai Chung Road; and
- Traffic along westbound Leighton Road will be diverted to Wong Nai Chung Road.

C. Learner drivers prohibition

Learner drivers will be prohibited to turn left from Caroline Hill Road to Leighton Road between one and a half hours before the start of the first race and one hour after the last race. In addition, learner drivers will be prohibited from accessing the following roads within the above period of time:

- Shan Kwong Road between Yik Yam Street and Wong Nai Chung Road;
- Village Road between its upper and lower junctions with Shan Kwong Road;
- Percival Street between Hennessy Road and Leighton Road;
- Canal Road East; and
- The service road leading from Gloucester Road to Canal Road flyover.

D. Suspension of parking spaces

Parking spaces on southbound Wong Nai Chung Road between Sports Road and Blue Pool Road will be suspended from 11am to 7pm during day racing, from 4.30pm to 11.59pm during evening racing, and from 5pm to 11.59pm during night racing.

Any vehicles found illegally parked within the precincts of the above affected areas will be towed away without prior notice.

Actual implementation of road closure and traffic diversion will be made by the Police at the time depending on traffic conditions in the areas. Motorists should exercise tolerance and patience, and follow the instructions of Police on site.