

LCQ13: Traffic signs damaged during super typhoon Mangkhut

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Chi-chuen and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (March 20):

Question:

Some members of the public have relayed that quite a number of large traffic signs for giving route directions to motorists have not been repaired since they were damaged during the onslaught of super typhoon Mangkhut in Hong Kong in September last year, which causes inconvenience to motorists. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of traffic signs damaged during the onslaught of Mangkhut in Hong Kong and, among them, the number of those for which the repair works were not yet completed as at February 16 this year and the reasons for that; and

(2) whether it has measures in place to shorten the time needed for repairing traffic signs?

Reply:

President,

My consolidated reply to the two parts of the Hon Chan Chi-chuen's question is as follows:

The Highways Department (HyD) is responsible for the maintenance of public roads and associated facilities (including traffic signs) under its jurisdiction. Regular inspections are conducted and in case of defects in road surfaces or associated facilities, the HyD will arrange repair works as soon as possible to maintain the smooth operation of road systems and ensure the safety of road users.

The super typhoon Mangkhut struck Hong Kong and its adjacent areas with extremely ferocious winds. With the Hurricane Signal No. 10 in force for ten hours, Mangkhut brought Hong Kong record-breaking storm surge, causing widespread damage and a far-reaching impact. After the typhoon, HyD staff have immediately inspected the conditions of public roads and associated facilities under the department's purview with a view to commencing repair works promptly. According to information provided by the HyD, a total of 370 traffic signs maintained by the department were damaged.

As a considerable number of traffic signs were damaged at the same time, those signs that are more commonly used ran out of stock, and fresh orders had to be placed for new replacements. For certain damaged traffic signs, their repair works would require temporary closure of some roads to ensure

the safety of road users and maintenance workers. For example, if a traffic sign was located at the central median of a road, the HyD had to formulate arrangements for temporary traffic diversion to ensure minimal impact on traffic flow before carrying out the repair works. As at December 16, 2018, within three months after the passage of Mangkhut, the HyD had already repaired over 70 per cent of the damaged traffic signs. In the remaining cases where the damaged traffic signs are being handled, the HyD has arranged to place temporary traffic signs at appropriate locations to alert motorists to the direction of traffic. As at March 16, 2019, the HyD has already completed the repair works for a total of 363 (about 98 per cent) damaged traffic signs. As for the remaining seven damaged traffic signs, their repair works are still being pursued because of the lead time required for ordering new replacement signs, formulating arrangements for traffic diversion, holding discussions on the works arrangement with the public utility companies affected, and diverting underground utilities for the conduct of works. The HyD will complete the repair works for all the seven traffic signs mentioned above within the first half of 2019.

The HyD has been sparing no effort to promptly carry out recovery work after the typhoon. However, the damage caused by Mangkhut was so extensive that the recovery efforts required more time and resources than those for previous typhoons. The HyD will continue to strive for more effective preparation for and response to natural disasters so as to enhance the department's capability in post-disaster recovery and repair works.