

LCQ16: Safety of hikers

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Pui-leung and a written reply by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, in the Legislative Council today (May 14):

Question:

Various hiking trails and country parks in Hong Kong have all along attracted many local people and overseas visitors to go hiking. However, it has been reported that quite a number of hikers are inexperienced or ill-equipped, resulting in frequent hiking accidents, and some of them have even disregarded safety in a bid to "check-in", which has aroused concerns and worries in society. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the number of mountain search and rescue (S&R) calls received by the Government in the past two years, as well as the respective numbers of casualties of local people and overseas visitors involved in the relevant incidents; the government expenditures involved in the relevant calls and S&R operations;
- (2) given that the webpage of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) contains the high risk locations with records of fatal and serious accidents in country parks, whether the authorities have further drawn up a list of "hiking blackspots" and the points to note and stepped up publicity among members of the public and tourists; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (3) as it is learnt that in order to deter risk-taking behaviours without regard to the consequences, some places have started to collect rescue fees from hikers, whether the Government will erect fences and warning signs at high-risk locations where hiking accidents frequently occur; whether the authorities will follow the practice of other regions and collect rescue fees from hikers who have accidents despite warnings and seek rescue; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that, and whether there are other measures intended to be implemented to deter the risk-taking behaviours concerned; and
- (4) as it is learnt that the "Enjoy Hiking" mobile application launched by the AFCD is equipped with a "Hiker Tracking Service" which can record the location of users so as to shorten the S&R time after they have an accident, of the number of downloads of the application and, among such downloads, the number of users with Internet Protocol addresses outside Hong Kong; of the measures put in place by the authorities to enhance the promotion of hiking safety among overseas visitors?

Reply:

President,

The Government attaches great importance to publicising and promoting hiking safety, as well as promoting hiking etiquette and the message of protecting the natural environment to the public and tourists through various channels. Having consulted the Security Bureau, the reply to the question raised by the Hon Chan Pui-leung is as follows:

(1) In the past two years, the number of mountain search and rescue calls received by the Fire Services Department (FSD) and the number of casualties involved are tabulated below:

Year	Number of mountain search and rescue calls received	Number of Injuries (Fatalities)
2023	695 cases	424 (15)
2024	588 cases	345 (15)

The FSD does not keep a breakdown of the number of casualties involving local residents and foreign visitors. As the above rescue operations do not involve additional manpower and salary expenditure, the FSD does not keep a breakdown of the expenditure involved.

(2) Through the "Enjoy Hiking" website (hiking.gov.hk), the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) provides consolidated information of different hiking trails to hikers to facilitate their planning of hiking trips. It also lists 20 high risk locations with records of fatal and serious accidents in country parks (high-risk locations), according to factors such as previous records of serious and fatal accidents, the causes of such accidents, as well as the site conditions, with a view to reminding hikers to avoid accessing those areas. The AFCD will regularly review and update the list of high-risk locations as needed.

To promote public awareness on hiking safety, the AFCD regularly organises education activities, including school visits, guided tours, roving exhibitions and game booths at shopping malls and Country Parks Visitor Centres. The AFCD will also disseminate safety information through online videos, social media platforms, websites, and pamphlets distributed at Country Parks Visitor Centres. Concurrently, the Hong Kong Police Force, the FSD, the Government Flying Service and the Civil Aid Service also raise hiker's awareness on hiking safety through various channels and events.

(3) The Government has always accorded top priority to public safety and the protection of people's life and property. While the Government strongly discourages the public from taking risks to perform dangerous activities, effective, reliable and efficient emergency services will still be provided to people in distress or in need under all circumstances. We do not hope that those in need would hesitate in seeking emergency call services due to any reasons, including levy. The AFCD has also installed warning signs in suitable areas of the high-risk locations to remind hikers to avoid accessing

those areas. The AFCD will review the situations of different areas from time to time, modify or add suitable warning signs and barriers where needed.

(4) As at April 2025, the "Enjoy Hiking" mobile application had been downloaded for over 480 000 times, including approximately 100 000 downloads by users with non-local IP addresses.

The AFCD, in collaboration with the Tourism Commission and the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB), has been promoting green tourism and sharing messages on hiking safety and nature conservation through HKTB's "Hong Kong Great Outdoors" thematic website

(www.discoverhongkong.com/eng/explore/great-outdoor.html) and its social media platforms, to ensure that tourists enjoy the countryside in Hong Kong in a safe and nature-friendly manner. Furthermore, the AFCD collaborates with the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices in the Mainland and the Forestry Administration of Guangdong Province to promote Hong Kong's natural scenery and hiking routes, as well as to disseminate hiking safety messages, through their social media platforms in the Mainland.