

LCQ17: Coping with extreme weather

Following is a question by the Hon Kenneth Leung and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Ms Bernadette Linn, in the Legislative Council today (May 28):

Question:

There are views pointing out that in recent years, Hong Kong has been affected time and again by localised rainstorms, super typhoons and even very hot weather, thereby exposing the safety as well as lives and properties of members of the public to a greater risk. On coping with extreme weather, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective numbers of weather warnings and signals issued by the Hong Kong Observatory (HKO) in each of the past five years (set out by type of weather warnings and signals);

(2) in order to cope with extreme weather (including super typhoons and severe rainstorms) that may occur in Hong Kong, of the details of the interdepartmental drills conducted and contingency plans drawn up by various government departments so far this year (including the number of government departments and personnel involved); whether various government departments have put in place a comprehensive contingency mechanism for coping with extreme weather to assist members of the public and disseminate the relevant information in a timely manner;

(3) given that in the past, flooding and landslides frequently occurred in some districts (including Chai Wan, Wong Tai Sin, Wan Chai, Yuen Long and Tsim Sha Tsui) during rainstorm, whether the authorities have increased the supporting staff for flood and disaster prevention work specifically for those districts; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(4) whether the authorities will formulate a mechanism to require the relevant government departments to take corresponding measures in the districts concerned simultaneously when the Localised Heavy Rain Advisory was issued by the HKO, e.g. strengthening local flood monitoring and deploying manpower to clear the drains, with a view to preventing the occurrence of localised large-scale flooding;

(5) given that the 2023 Policy Address indicated that the Drainage Services Department would complete the "Strategic Planning Study on Flood Management against Sea Level Rise and Extreme Rainfall" and develop a forward-looking strategy, of the progress of the relevant work and the findings of the Study; whether the Government has set aside resources for the implementation of the recommendations of the Study and the construction of the relevant infrastructure facilities; and

(6) whether it has further stepped up public education on disaster

preparedness, e.g. regularly arranging for members of the public and students to participate in disaster prevention exercise, and teaching members of the public the corresponding measures to take when extreme weather and even natural disasters occur; if so, of the details; if not, whether it will strengthen such efforts in the future?

Reply:

President,

The responses to the various parts of the question are as follows:

(1) Based on the information provided by the Environment and Ecology Bureau and the Hong Kong Observatory, the number of various warnings and signals issued by the Observatory in the past five years is set out below:

(i) Number of Tropical Cyclone Warning Signals issued

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
No. 1	6	9	8	8	11
No. 3	7	6	8	6	7
No. 8	3	2	6	6	2
No. 9	1	0	0	2	0
No. 10	0	0	0	1	0

(ii) Number of Thunderstorm Warning, Special Announcement on Flooding in the northern New Territories, Rainstorm Warning Signal and Landslip Warning issued

Year		2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Thunderstorm Warning		148	155	125	159	189
Special Announcement on Flooding in the northern New Territories		4	10	4	6	2
Rainstorm Warning Signal	Amber	30	27	23	37	45
	Red	11	6	2	8	4
	Black	2	2	0	2	0
Landslip Warning		2	2	1	3	1

(iii) Number of other warning and signal issued

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Strong Monsoon Signal	19	14	21	17	16
Very Hot Weather Warning	23	32	21	42	28

Cold Weather Warning		5	3	5	6	7
Frost Warning		2	6	1	4	1
Fire Danger Warning	Yellow	37	41	39	39	34
	Red	15	9	20	25	21

(2) After consultation with the Security Bureau and the Home Affairs Department, our reply is as follows:

The Government has implemented the following measures in relation to emergency response mechanisms, interdepartmental drills, and the provision of timely assistance and dissemination of relevant information:

To address extreme weather events, the Security Bureau has formulated the Contingency Plan for Natural Disasters, which sets out the Government's strategies, organisational framework, and alerting system for dealing with natural disasters, as well as the functions and responsibilities of Government bureaux/departments, public utility companies, and non-governmental organisations in the events of natural disasters. When major natural disasters happen, the Security Bureau will immediately activate the Emergency Monitoring and Support Centre to co-ordinate a comprehensive response and collaborate the actions of relevant departments and organisations (including their emergency control centres) to ensure the incidents are handled swiftly and effectively.

In the event of super typhoons or other large-scale natural disasters, the Chief Secretary for Administration will convene an interdepartmental Steering Committee meeting for provisioning high-level co-ordination and supervision in the various stages of preparedness, contingency and recovery as well as setting priorities for various tasks, thereby enabling the normal daily living of the community to resume as quickly as practicable. If a natural disaster has caused extreme and widespread impacts, such as widespread flooding, severe landslides, or severe disruption to public transportation services, the Steering Committee will consider making an "extreme conditions" announcement to advise members of the public to remain in their original safe locations.

The Security Bureau has been organising interdepartmental drills to enhance communication and collaboration among various government departments under different extreme weather conditions. Through the drills with various testing scenarios, the departments' emergency plans will be refined. As at May 18 this year, the Security Bureau and relevant departments had conducted a total of 10 drills related to extreme weather, involving 33 policy bureaux and departments, with a total of 960 participants. For areas vulnerable to flooding or seawater inundation, the respective District Offices will also conduct interdepartmental drills before the typhoon season to strengthen co-ordination among departments, enhance response capabilities and raise residents' understanding of response arrangements.

The Government will also, as appropriate, disseminate to the public the

latest weather forecasts, natural disaster alerts, and related information including flooding, landslides, and traffic arrangements for affected roads through the Information Services Department, the media and social media platforms.

(3) The Drainage Services Department (DSD) is currently taking forward 15 major drainage improvement works and it is anticipated that these projects will be completed progressively by 2030. These projects include works in the abovementioned areas of concern, namely Chai Wan, Wong Tai Sin, Yuen Long, and Tsim Sha Tsui (Note). In recent years, the DSD has also completed a number of minor works in these districts, including improvement works to the drainage systems near Chai Wan Road roundabout and in Wong Tai Sin.

The DSD has identified around 240 locations prone to blockage in Hong Kong. Whenever the Hong Kong Observatory forecasts severe rainstorm, the DSD will arrange and deploy resources to step up their inspections and, where necessary, carry out immediate clearance of blocked drains to ensure proper functioning of the drainage system.

In relation to landslides, apart from conducting regular inspections of slopes under their maintenance responsibilities, relevant government departments need to additionally carry out special inspections for government man-made slopes adjacent to sole accesses to community or important livelihood facilities before each wet season. This helps minimise the potential impact on people's lives due to incidents on these slopes. The relevant inspections were completed before the wet season this year. On the other hand, the Geotechnical Engineering Office will remind private owners to complete all regular slope inspections and the necessary slope maintenance before the onset of wet season through letters, social media posts, television promotional videos, radio broadcasts and media briefings, etc.

(4) The DSD has been working closely with the Hong Kong Observatory and has implemented the "Just-in-time Clearance" arrangement since 2020. Under this arrangement, when the Observatory forecasts severe rainstorms, the DSD will immediately deploy manpower to inspect locations prone to blockage and clear any blocked drains, thereby reducing the risk of flooding during heavy rainstorms. Since 2022, the DSD has taken proactive measures to further enhance its preparatory measures following the Hong Kong Observatory's issuance of the Localised Heavy Rain Advisory. During periods of heavy rainstorms, the DSD, depending on the rainfall severity, will increase the number of emergency response teams to 180 teams. These teams are deployed to various districts to promptly handle flooding incidents so as to minimise the impact of flooding on the public.

The DSD also adopts innovative technologies, including the deployment of powerful pumping robots, piloting artificial intelligence-based flood monitoring systems, and the use of new flood monitoring devices, such as Flood Monitoring Devices, and dissemination of real-time water level information.

(5) The DSD completed the "Strategic Planning Study on Flood Management

Against Sea Level Rise and Extreme Rainfall", and the findings and recommendations were presented at the meeting of the Panel on Development held on May 27, 2025. Please refer to the relevant document for details www.legco.gov.hk/yr2025/english/panels/dev/papers/dev20250527cb1-904-4-e.pdf.

(6) To enhance public awareness of disaster preparedness, departments under the Security Bureau carry out publicity and education through websites, social media platforms, and carnival events. In addition, the DSD promotes awareness of the risks associated with extreme weather and the corresponding measures to the public and stakeholders through a variety of channels, including TV promotional videos, publications, and outreach education programmes. The DSD also assists the property management sector to understand appropriate actions to take during flooding incidents. The Civil Engineering and Development Department also formulates action plans to address floods in low-lying coastal areas, maintains communication with residents and raises awareness of climate change through various activities. Furthermore, the Geotechnical Engineering Office promotes public awareness of slope safety through public education and publicity activities, including exhibitions and talks in shopping malls and schools, and providing maintenance advice to private slope owners.

Note: Major drainage improvement works in Chai Wan, Wong Tai Sin, Yuen Long and Tsim Sha Tsui include: (i) Drainage improvement works in Eastern District – phase 1, (ii) Drainage improvement works in Wong Tai Sin, (iii) Yuen Long Barrage Scheme, (iv) Improvement of Yuen Long Town Nullah (town centre section), (v) Drainage improvement works at Yuen Long – stage 2 and (vi) Drainage Improvement Works in Tsim Sha Tsui.