

LegCo Panel on Transport

Information Note on Alert System for Major Transport Emergency Incidents

Purpose

At the Panel meeting held on 14 December 2001, Members were briefed on the contingency arrangements for handling major traffic and transport incidents and the findings of TD's review on the Cross Harbour Tunnel incident on 26 November 2001. At the meeting, Members asked for more information on the procedures and guidelines for handling major transport emergency incidents under the current alert system.

2. This information note provides Members with supplementary information on the procedures for activating the alert system. Relevant government departments, public transport operators and tunnel operators are required to observe the alert system.

Types of Emergency Incidents

3. The emergency incidents handled by Transport Department may be grouped into three main types :

(i) ***Natural Disaster Emergencies*** –

These include rainstorms, flooding, landslips and tropical cyclones.

(ii) ***Public Transport Emergencies*** –

These include disruption or breakdown of public transport services. Such emergency may also arise due to other factors such as severe road congestion or obstruction affecting the normal operation of public transport services.

(iii) ***Major Road Obstructions*** –

These include severe road congestion or obstruction due to road collapse, accidents/incidents on strategic roads/tunnels/bridges, landslip, protest actions, etc.

Procedures for activating the alert system

4. The procedures for activating the alert system for the different types of emergency incidents are summarized below.

(i) Natural Disasters

5. For natural disasters, the Hong Kong Observatory (HKO) is normally the source department to issue the warning messages to TD, other government departments and the public. Upon receipt of warning signals on rainstorms and tropical cyclones, TD will multi-fax the message to public transport and toll road operators, to alert them of the possible territory wide impact due to the rainstorms or tropical cyclones.

6. Close liaisons by direct telephone lines will be made with the public transport and toll road operators during red and black rainstorms and when typhoon signal number 3 or above is hoisted. Special attention will be made to areas with no alternate transport, such as the outlying islands.

(ii) Public Transport Emergency

7. The source operator (i.e. the public transport operator having problem with provision of his service) should issue the “Amber Alert” or “Red Alert” by multi-fax as follows :

- a) “Amber Alert” should be issued by the source operator if he assesses that an emergency situation which could lead to a serious disruption of service is likely to arise;
- b) “Red Alert” should be issued by the source operator if the emergency incident has occurred and is expected to continue for over 20 minutes and emergency transport support services from other operators are required.

8. Upon receipt of an “Amber Alert” or “Red Alert” message, TD would keep in close touch with the source operator and prepare for possible remedial measures. TD would mobilize additional staff resources if necessary to work in the Emergency Transport Co-ordination Centre, to monitor and check that the

relief transport services provided are appropriate and adequate in the circumstances and to provide assistance as necessary. Public notices will also be issued in time to warn the travelers of the public transport service disruption, such that they could look for alternative transport means or make adjustment to their journeys.

(iii) Major Road Obstructions

9. Generally, these road obstructions referred to those incidents that cause the closure of traffic lanes in one or both directions on major roads. The source agency in this case will be the first department or operator to become aware of the incident. For example, in case of traffic accidents, generally Police is the source agency; in case of burst of watermains, Water Supplies Department would be the source agency. In case of tunnel incidents, the tunnel operator would be the source agency.

10. On road incidents, the source agency should send out the alert message to relevant parties when a serious road incident is detected or expected to occur. Serious road incidents refer to those resulting in :

- a) complete closure of two or more lanes in one direction on a strategic route (e.g. Cross Harbour Tunnel, Tsing Ma Bridge, Tuen Mun Road, Tolo Highway) for 20 minutes or more; or
- b) complete closure of a local distributor (e.g. Pokfulam Road, Salisbury Road, Clear Water Bay Road) in one direction for 20 minutes or more.

11. Under most circumstances, the alert messages on major road obstructions are “Red Alert” as road incidents are generally detected after it occurred (e.g. severe traffic accidents, burst of watermains, sudden collapse of building scaffolding, etc.) On rare occasions, “Amber Alert” messages on major road obstructions may be issued (e.g. possible delay in completion of planned maintenance works causing delay in re-opening of traffic lanes)

12. When TD is informed of a major road obstruction incident, the staff would issue the alert message to relevant public transport and toll road operators, and liaise closely with Police and the source agency on the traffic impact of the obstruction as well as the time for re-opening of the closed lanes. Public

transport operators upon receipt of the message would closely monitor the traffic impact on their services and if necessary, liaise with TD on the diversion of their services. Public notices will also be issued in time to inform travelers of the congestion situation, use of alternative routes and any bus route diversions.

Advice sought

13. Members are requested to note the above.

Transport Department
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