

**For information**

**Legislative Council Panel on Health Services**

**Exercise MAPLE  
18 and 19 November 2004**

**Purpose**

This paper outlines the scope of the inter-departmental drill, entitled Exercise MAPLE, to test out the Administration and other agencies' contingency plans for infectious diseases, and the coordination as well as information flow within and outside the government in preparation for and during an outbreak situation.

**The Exercise**

2. With the experience of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak last year, relevant bureaux/departments and organizations have made tremendous efforts in refining their contingency plans for combating SARS-like communicable diseases. Exercise MAPLE aimed to test out, under a safe environment, Hong Kong's preparedness against future outbreak of infectious diseases, and constituted an essential element in the Government's overall emergency response system for outbreak of infectious diseases. It was also organized in response to the SARS Expert Committee's recommendation on regular testing of contingency plans by the government to deal with public health emergencies. A total of 10 local, Mainland and overseas experts were invited to be observers of the Exercise. The adequacy of contingency operational protocols formulated by the bureaux/departments and agencies concerned was assessed through the Exercise.

3. Exercise MAPLE was conducted on 18 and 19 November. The Exercise involved over 30 bureaux, departments and organizations. It provided an opportunity for the government and relevant stakeholders to practise and review contingency plans and assess the integration of the Centre for Health Protection (CHP), which assumed the role of Exercise Director, and its Emergency Response Centre into these plans.

4. The Exercise scenario involved two clusters of medical and health care workers in two public hospitals who developed fever and gastroenteritis symptoms after having close contacts with two index patients respectively. The situation triggered the government's overall emergency response mechanism on the possible outbreak of an unknown communicable disease. The CHP, upon notification from the Hospital Authority about the outbreaks in the two hospitals, started epidemiological investigations and contact tracing. Subsequently, local transmission of the disease in the community was confirmed. When the disease was later defined by the World Health Organization as Severe Haemorrhagic Fever Syndrome (SHFS, a notional name designed for the purpose of the exercise), steps were taken to include SFSF in Schedule 1 of "Infectious Diseases" of the Quarantine and Prevention of Disease Ordinance (Cap 141), which enabled necessary isolation and home confinement to be conducted. The Exercise came to the end with a mock evacuation of residents from a building affected by SHFS. To avoid inconveniencing or alarming the public, ground movement for the Exercise was limited to Exercise venues at the hospitals and a Police Depot, located in Sheung Shui, New Territories, at which the evacuation took place. A large part of the play took place in various command and communication centres.

5. During the Exercise, overall coordination among bureaux/departments/agencies was also tested out through an inter-departmental Steering Committee meeting chaired by the Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food (SHWF) to review the adequacy and coordination of control and response measures, and to decide on additional measures as necessary. The Acting Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region also convened a high-level meeting with major Principal Officials when local transmission of the disease was confirmed to formulate an overall disease control strategy. The decision to evacuate the affected building was made at the meeting. Membership of the two Steering Committees is set out at Annexes A and B.

6. This paper is for Members' information.

**Health, Welfare and Food Bureau**  
**December 2004**

**Steering Committee chaired by SHWF**

The Steering Committee is composed of the following core members, and can co-opt other members<sup>1</sup> as situations may warrant:

Permanent Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food  
Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower  
Permanent Secretary for Economic Development and Labour  
Chief Executive, Hospital Authority  
Director of Health  
Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene  
Controller, Centre for Health Protection  
Director of Home Affairs  
Director of Information Services  
Director of Social Welfare  
Commissioner for Tourism

---

<sup>1</sup> At the meeting held on 18 November, co-opted members included Permanent Secretary for the Civil Service, Commissioner of Police and Director of Immigration.

**Chief Executive Steering Committee**

The Chief Executive Steering Committee is composed of the following core members, and can co-opt other members as situations may warrant:

Chief Secretary for Administration  
Financial Secretary  
Secretary for Justice  
Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food  
Secretary for Economic Development and Labour  
Secretary for Education and Manpower  
Secretary for Environment, Transport and Works  
Secretary for Home Affairs  
Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands  
Secretary for Security  
Director of Chief Executive's Office  
Director of Health  
Director of Information Services