

Legislative Council Panel on Housing

Enhancement of closed-circuit television systems in existing public rental housing estates

Purpose

This paper aims to brief Members on the programme of enhancing the closed-circuit television (CCTV) security systems in existing public rental housing (PRH) estates under the Housing Authority (HA).

Background

2. In view of security needs, the Housing Department (HD) began to install comprehensive security systems in all PRH estates in 1998. It mainly involved providing metal gates and combination locks at main entrances, side entrances and staircase exits, installing intercoms and providing CCTVs at main entrances and lifts. The images recorded would be transmitted to and displayed on 15” monitors, and recorded on analogue video tapes at ground floor lift lobby service counters with security guards on duty. The systems adopted at that time were normally monochrome and the video tapes had to be operated, changed and stored manually. The conventional video-recording system can no longer satisfy the current need in security management.

Enhancing the Security Systems

3. To provide more effective security management, the HD decided in 2007 to upgrade security systems in the following two areas –

- i. by enhancing the security systems and migrating from conventional monochrome CCTV systems to modern digital colour CCTV systems providing clearer images, which enhances the efficiency and effectiveness in surveillance; and
- ii. by increasing the number of coloured video cameras to cover a wider surveillance area for better protection of tenants and properties, and crime prevention.

The entire project will be implemented in six years at an estimated cost of about \$92 million.

Digital Technology to replace the Conventional Monochrome CCTV Systems

4. Digitalisation of the security monitoring systems provides clearer pictures and more stable images. Video signals of at least 16 different locations can be transmitted simultaneously to the service counter of the security guard at the lift lobby, which is more than that by the conventional video-recording system. Surveillance efficiency can thus be greatly enhanced. The system can further transmit the real-time images from different blocks to the security control room of the estate management office as a second-tier control. In the event of activation of an alarm button in any lift, the captured images will be instantly displayed in full screen. This enables the security guard at the service counter to respond and render support immediately. The digital recording system serves multiple purposes simultaneously such as surveillance, playback, real-time viewing, video-recording, searching and signal transmission to ensure operation at all times. It has surpassed the limit of conventional video-recording systems which cannot perform the function of simultaneous playback and video-recording. The system is also capable of storing video-recorded image data in the hard disk for up to 14 days. The image data recorded on the 15th day automatically overwrites those stored on the first day, and no manual operation is required. The conventional system required recording tapes be changed every day and it took much longer to search past image data.

5. The quicker transmission of video signals and higher resolution of coloured images provides steadier recording and playing-back which facilitates the effective identification of targets or suspects. The images recorded are also smoother, as the conventional video-recording system can only record images once every three seconds, while digital recording can capture six images per second. Digital recording is also capable of storing image data for 14 days with quick-search function by date and time of any incident for playback. Video-recorded signals can be duplicated to external hard disks to assist police investigations if necessary.

Increasing the number of Coloured Video Cameras in PRH Estates

6. Apart from installing coloured video cameras at main entrances at the lobby, side entrances and lifts of PRH blocks, the HD will also install additional coloured video cameras at blind spots, dark corners of rear staircases and letter box areas, etc. A wider surveillance area can thus be covered for better protection of tenants and properties as well as for crime prevention. Tenants can also view the images of the main entrances and inside the lifts through their televisions at home. In light of individual circumstances, Housing Managers and Members of the Estate Management Advisory Committees can recommend the location for installing video cameras. About 20 cameras are installed in each block in general, as compared to 12 in the past. As each video-recorder and monitor of the new

system can transmit and display video signals of at most 16 cameras simultaneously, normally each block will be installed with two video-recorders and two 19” monitors showing the video signals of about 20 cameras.

Privacy Protection

7. All video images recorded by the CCTV Security System are regarded as personal data. To comply with the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance, surveillance and recording by the system will be operated in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data. HD will display notices at the ground floor lift lobby of PRH blocks, notifying tenants and visitors in advance that the video footage will be used for security and property management purposes only. The system will be accessible to only authorised management personnel who are responsible for operating the system, including duplicating, erasing, processing and custody of the video footage.

Works Progress

8. All works are scheduled for completion in 2013/2014. To this date, good progress has been made with enhancement of CCTV systems already completed in a total of 206 housing blocks in 43 PRH estates. Moreover, all new PRH estates completed after January 2009 have been installed with the digital CCTV Security System.

9. Members are invited to note the programme of enhancing CCTV systems in existing PRH estates.

**Transport and Housing Bureau
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