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政府總部
運輸及房屋局

運輸科
香港添馬添美道 2 號
政府總部東翼



Transport and
Housing Bureau

Government Secretariat

Transport Branch

East Wing, Central Government
Offices, 2 Tim Mei Avenue,
Tamar, Hong Kong

本局檔號 OUR REF.: THB(T) L4 / 3 / 58
來函檔號 YOUR REF.: CB1/PL/TP

電話 Tel. No.: 3509 8181
傳真 Fax No.: 2136 8017

By Email

10 October 2013

Ms Sophie LAU
Clerk to Panel on Transport
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Ms Lau,

Construction Incident of the Central – Wan Chai Bypass Project

Thank you for your letter of 21 June 2013, relaying the joint letter from Dr Hon Kenneth CHAN Ka-lok and Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki concerning the construction incident of the Central – Wan Chai Bypass project. The letter has been received and our reply is as follows:

The Government attaches great importance to construction safety, and has all along been requiring contractors to undertake construction works safely in strict compliance with relevant requirements under the legislations and the contracts, so as to safeguard the public and the working parties of the concerned works. For major road works projects, like the Central – Wan Chai Bypass project, the Government has engaged professional engineering consultants and dedicated teams of resident site staff to supervise the works to ensure proper implementation of the works.

Before construction, the contractor has to submit proposed construction method statements, risk assessment, design of temporary works concerned and the associated safety measures (individual complicated construction activities will further be checked and certified by Independent Checking Engineer) to the resident site staff for vetting to ensure the safety, suitability and practicality of the design of works before allowing commencement of works.

During construction, the resident site staff exercise close supervision on the construction works to ensure that they are implemented in accordance with the established method. Should abnormality arise during construction that may have impact on construction safety, the contractor will be required to stop the works, undertake review and, where appropriate, adopt remedial / improvement measures.

After the occurrence of the incident on 6 May this year, the Highways Department have immediately instructed the contractor to stop the concerned operation on-site and required the resident site staff to investigate and follow-up. The investigation revealed that, at the material time, the contractor was laying concrete into a diaphragm wall panel. During the process, the contractor had vertically lifted up the concerned tremie pipe with lifting plant and lifting wire from the deep diaphragm wall trench and exposed it above ground level. The pipe was then temporarily fixed on the working platform seated on the top of the trench for clearing concrete blockage inside the pipe. When the pipe was lifted up again, the master ring of the lifting wire had accidentally shifted position and detached from the lifting hook. Being off-hooked, the tremie pipe fell over the Island Eastern Corridor Hing Fat Street Slip Road flyover adjacent to the construction site and lay onto the parapets on the two sides of the flyover.

The Highways Department has urged the contractor to learn lesson from the incident, comprehensively review the construction risk of the concerned lifting operation and implement specific improvement measures below to prevent recurrence of similar incident in the future. The said measures include:

- i) using shackle to replace lifting hook in the operation concerned to avoid accidental detachment. The resident site staff will also ensure the strict implementation of this measure;
- ii) re-testing all lifting plant & equipment by qualified person after the incident, coupled with more frequent checkings and, where necessary, repairs by the contractor's mechanics, to ensure they are in safe working conditions; and
- iii) strengthening safety training to the relevant workers to enhance construction safety standard on site.

The contractor has already carried out the above improvement measures on the concerned site. The Highways Department will continue to closely monitor the contractor in implementing the concerned improvement measures on site, so as to avoid similar incident as well as to ensure safety of the public and workers. The Highways Department has also shared the experience of this incident with other works departments in order to prevent the occurrence of similar incident.

On the other hand, according to the requirements of the contract, the contractor is required to ensure the safe implementation of works. Regarding this incident, the contractor shall bear contractual and relevant legal responsibilities. At the same time, Highways Department had adequately reflected the construction incident in the contractor's performance marking, which would affect the contractor's bidding for construction contracts of the Government in future.

Should there be any further enquiry, you may contact Highways Department and their project team via the 24-hour dedicated hotline of the Central – Wan Chai Bypass project at 2512 6233.

(Miss Carrie Lee)
for Secretary for Transport and Housing

c.c. Highways Department

(Attn.: Mr K.M. Bok)