

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PANEL ON DEVELOPMENT

Request to Discuss Lift Safety Issues

Follow-up Actions taken in response to Hon HO Kai Ming's letter to
the Panel on Development on 10 April 2018

Regarding Hon HO's concerns on lift safety, we would like to provide the following response:

2. The lift incident which happened at Waterside Plaza, Tsuen Wan, on 8 April 2018, caused two lift passengers to sustain injuries. The Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) immediately deployed investigation staff to site upon receiving the notification. The preliminary investigation revealed that the suspension ropes did not break and were intact. For ascertaining the cause of the incident, the EMSD is investigating the cause of the lift failing to stop after reaching the designated floor. Initial findings indicate that the cause of the incident might have been insufficient traction between the suspension ropes and the traction sheave or the failure of the braking system. The EMSD has suspended the operation of the lift concerned, and will only allow its resumption of operation after the conclusion of the EMSD's investigation and repair works by the lift contractor as well as the completion of thorough checking by a registered engineer. The EMSD will also carry out investigation into whether there had been contraventions of the Lifts and Escalators Ordinance. The EMSD will strictly enforce the law if contravention has been identified.

3. To ensure the normal operation of the lifts of the same brand in Waterside Plaza, the EMSD and the registered lift contractor have inspected the concerned lifts on the first two days after the incident, and the inspection results revealed no abnormality. As another prudent measure, the EMSD has requested all registered lift contractors which are responsible for the maintenance of around 380 lifts of the same brand in Hong Kong to complete a special inspection within two weeks after the incident, to ensure the operational safety of the lifts in question, and to allay the public's concerns.

4. The EMSD anticipates that the investigation into the lift incident at Waterside Plaza can be completed within 2-3 months, and will release the investigation results and follow up actions in due course.

5. The Government places great importance on lift and escalator safety, and strictly enforce the Lifts and Escalators Ordinance (Cap 618) (“the Ordinance”), to ensure the public can enjoy safe lift services. According to the current provisions, the responsible person must ensure lift maintenance work is carried out by a registered contractor. The registered contractor must carry out periodic maintenance on the lift at durations not exceeding one month. And a registered engineer must carry out examination of the lift at no more than 12 month intervals, in order to renew the use permit issued by the EMSD. The Code of Practice for Lift Works and Escalator Works issued by the EMSD specified the inspection and work items required to be done during periodic maintenance, as well as the items to be thoroughly examined periodically, to verify if the lift is in safe working order.

6. The EMSD has been carrying out audit inspections of the lift and the registered contractor’s works, on a risk-based approach based on risk factors such as the lifts’ years in service, complaint and defect records, and the contractor’s performance rating, to monitor the maintenance work and check for contraventions of the Ordinance, and will continue to strictly enforce the Ordinance to ensure lift safety.

7. The EMSD has also been promoting the modernisation of aged lifts. Existing lifts were installed for use over different decades to the level of technology appropriate at the time, but rapid technology advancement in recent years means that existing lifts are not exactly state of the art. There is room for improvement to make aged lifts more safe, reliable and comfortable. For this reason, the EMSD recommends responsible persons of aged lifts to consider timely installation of the modernisation devices. It must however be emphasised that, with proper maintenance and periodic examination, the existing lifts are safe for use.

8. As regards lifts in which manufacturers or models have been discontinued, in general, lift manufacturers will design and manufacture their products in accordance with relevant international standards. Many parts may also be compatible with parts produced by other manufacturers. Therefore, discontinuation of production does not imply that the relevant parts and

components cannot be purchased from the market. It is also understood that some lift contractors have purchased some of the spare parts before the manufacturers stop production. However, with longer time after production stoppages, it is believed that the acquisition of compatible parts will become more and more difficult, therefore adversely affecting the time required for maintenance and repair, and reducing the availability of lifts. Since the compatible parts will eventually not be available in the market, the responsible person of the lift should liaise with their registered contractor in order to timely replace or modernise their lifts.

9. The Government also provides financial assistance to responsible persons for modernisation or replacement of their lifts. These include the “Integrated Building Maintenance Assistance Scheme” administered by the Urban Renewal Authority, “Building Safety Loan Scheme” administered by the Buildings Department, and “Building Maintenance Grant Scheme for Elderly Owners” administered by the Hong Kong Housing Society.

Development Bureau
Electrical and Mechanical Services Department
April 2018