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**Legislative Council**

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**Panel on Security**

**Information note prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat  
for the meeting on 6 March 2018**

**Mountain rescue strategy and high angle rescue operations**

The Fire Services Department ("FSD") provides, among others, emergency assistance to hikers in distress, for instance, when they lose their way, run into accident or need medical attention. According to the Administration's replies to relevant questions raised by Members at Council meetings, newly recruited fire personnel receive various types of rescue training, including mountain rescue, during their 26-week foundation training of FSD. FSD also provides advanced rescue training for its serving frontline fire personnel, which includes mountain rescue and high angle rescue. In addition, the Special Rescue Squad under FSD has received training in advanced mountain rescue techniques. FSD has kept its mountain rescue equipment under constant review and arranged overseas mountain rescue training for its personnel. To prepare for mountain rescue operations which are increasingly complicated and take place in high-risk areas, and in light of the rising popularity of mountain activities such as stream hiking, mountain biking and shoreline trekking in recent years, FSD has set up a Mountain Search and Rescue Team with three search dogs in early 2017 with a view to enhancing its capability in conducting mountain rescue operations. FSD has also posted Safety Hints on Mountain Activities ("Safety Hints"), covering areas such as choosing of suitable hiking route, paying attention to weather conditions as well as choosing of appropriate clothing and gears, on its website. The relevant questions raised by Members and the Administration's replies are in **Appendices I and II**.

2. The Administration will brief the Panel on Security on FSD's latest mountain rescue strategy and high angle rescue operations at the meeting on 6 March 2018.

**Appendix I****Press Releases**

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LCQ3: Hiking safety  
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Following is a question by the Hon Chan Hak-kan and a written reply by the Secretary for the Environment, Mr Wong Kam-sing, in the Legislative Council today (May 10):

Question:

It has been reported that the first four months of this year already saw the death of five persons, due to sickness or accidents during hiking, and this number has exceeded that of four persons for the whole of last year. Moreover, on March 22 this year, a Principal Fireman died on duty after losing his footing and falling off a cliff in a rescue operation for hikers who had got lost. A mountaineering expert has pointed out that hiking has become increasingly popular in recent years, but hikers often do not make adequate preparation before setting off, which has resulted in frequent accidents. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the respective numbers of rescue operations for hikers carried out in the past three years by staff members of the various government departments concerned;
- (2) whether it has plans to step up the relevant publicity work in the light of the inadequate preparation made by hikers before setting off; if so, of the details;
- (3) given that the risk of hikers encountering accidents at hiking spots not only depends on geographical factors but also varies from time to time with weather conditions (e.g. very hot, very cold, dry, rainstorm, and strong wind), whether the Government has plans to establish a comprehensive risk rating mechanism and disseminate, from time to time through such mechanism, information on the risk levels of hiking spots to enable hikers to select hiking spots according to their ability, experience and equipment;
- (4) whether it will consider establishing an open database on accident black spots in country parks and erecting warning signs on paths leading to such black spots, so as to remind hikers to stay away from danger; and
- (5) whether it will arrange more staff members of the Fire Services Department and other relevant government departments to receive training on mountain rescue; if so, of the details?

Reply:

President,

Our response to Hon Chan Hak-kan's questions is as follows:

- (1) Mountain search and rescue is mainly carried out by the Civil Aid Service (CAS), the Government Flying Service (GFS) and the Fire Services Department (FSD). According to the Police's records, there were 990, 1 134 and 1 327 cases of requests for assistance related to hikers reported via 999 emergency hotline in 2014, 2015 and 2016 respectively. The numbers of rescue

operations for hikers carried out by the CAS, the GFS and the FSD over the past three years are as follows:

	2014	2015	2016
CAS	118	133	109
GFS	503	560	513
FSD	403	340	357

(2) A number of government departments are involved in publicising and promoting hiking safety. The FSD has posted safety hints on mountain activities, including information on hiking routes, weather conditions, clothing and gears, on the Department's website for public information. In addition, the FSD would publicise such messages through various safety activities. The CAS plans to launch a series of promotional activities on hiking safety from May to December this year. These include distributing "Hiking Safety Checklists" and promotional materials at the starting points of popular hiking trails, organising talks and promoting through multimedia on hiking safety and accident handling procedures. The CAS also held the Launching Ceremony of the Hiking Safety Promotion Campaign with several government departments and mountaineering organisations at Pak Tam Chung P.H.A.B. (Physically Handicapped and Able-Bodied) Site in Sai Kung on May 3. The Police from time to time publicise messages on safety issues, which the public should pay attention to when going on hiking, through the Police Magazine programme and the Police's Facebook page. A recent episode of the Police Magazine programme related to hiking safety was broadcast in January 2017, while two video clips on hiking safety were also uploaded to the Police's Facebook page in 2016. The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) regularly organises promotional activities to raise awareness on hiking safety, including exhibitions and game booths, at shopping malls and Country Parks Visitor Centres, and disseminates safety message through Television Announcement in the Public Interest, website and pamphlets. The AFCD also sets up information boards and directory signs at suitable locations in country parks to provide trail information and to remind visitors of hiking safety.

(3) The AFCD has given advice to hikers to remind them to use trails that are managed and maintained by the AFCD, as well as promoted Long Distance Trails, Country Trails, Family Walks and Nature Trails through the "Enjoy Hiking" website and mobile application. The mobile application provide information of hiking routes, such as the level of difficulty of the routes, for the reference of hikers by taking into account the length, gradient, surface condition and time required for completing the journey. Individual hikers and hiking groups could make use of the information to plan for a suitable hiking route according to their physical fitness and experience.

In addition, the Hong Kong Observatory provides weather information, including weather report, forecast and weather warnings (such as tropical cyclone, rainstorm, thunderstorm, cold weather and very hot weather warning signals) through the website, mobile application and various social media platforms. Hikers should pay attention to the updated weather reports and forecast before set-off and during the course of hiking. The hiking activity should be re-routed or called-off if adverse weather is forecasted.

(4) The AFCD has already erected warning signs in areas which are

more dangerous and with previous record of severe accidents to alert hikers not to go there. The AFCD will review the measures from time to time, modify the existing warning signs and install additional ones where needed. The AFCD is reviewing and consolidating the relevant information, and will release the relevant information on its website before the hiking season of the year for the reference of hikers in planning their hiking routes.

(5) The Government has arranged training on mountain rescue for relevant disciplined services. We will review from time to time the need for additional training. With regard to the FSD, newly recruited fire personnel receive various types of rescue training, including mountain rescue, during their 26-week foundation training. The FSD also provides advanced rescue training for its serving frontline fire personnel, which includes mountain rescue, road traffic accident rescue, high angle rescue and basic swift water rescue. In addition, the Special Rescue Squad under the FSD has received training in advanced mountain rescue techniques. The FSD has kept its mountain rescue equipment under constant review and arranged overseas mountain rescue training for its personnel. To prepare for mountain rescue operations which are increasingly complicated and take place in high-risk areas, and in light of the rising popularity of mountain activities such as stream hiking, mountain biking and shoreline trekking in recent years, the FSD has set up a Mountain Search and Rescue Team with three search dogs early this year with a view to enhancing its capability in conducting mountain rescue operations. Besides, the CAS will deploy members from the Mountain Search and Rescue Company to attend advanced mountain rescue training in the United Kingdom every two years.

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## Appendix II

**Press Releases**

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LCQ11: Safety of hikers  
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Following is a question by the Hon Kenneth Lau and a written reply by the Secretary for the Environment, Mr Wong Kam-sing, in the Legislative Council today (January 24):

Question:

Quite a number of members of the public enjoy hiking in the mountains in the fine autumn weather. However, a number of fatal accidents in which hikers fell from a height after losing their footing have occurred one after another recently. Such accidents have aroused concerns about whether the safety awareness of hikers is adequate, and whether hiking trails are well-maintained. A mountaineering expert has pointed out that the large number of hikers during holidays has speeded up the wear and tear of some popular hiking trails, but such trails are left unrepaired over a long period of time. In addition, some hikers veer off the existing trails for shortcuts, resulting in soil erosion in the intertwining breakaway tracks on both sides of quite a number of trails, thereby aggravating the wear and tear of the trails. Regarding the safety of hikers, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has compiled statistics on the respective numbers of trails within and outside the ambit of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) at present; of the name (if any), the starting point and end point of each trail, as well as the government department(s) responsible for its maintenance;

(2) of the number of activities (e.g. "Trail Maintenance Workshop") organised by AFCD to recruit hikers as volunteers to help repair trails in each of the past five years; the details of such activities (including (i) the numbers of participating volunteers, (ii) the dates on which such activities took place, (iii) the names (if any) of the trails concerned, (iv) the problems addressed by the repair works, and (v) the difficulties encountered in the repair process);

(3) whether the AFCD has designated staff members dedicated to repairing hiking trails; if not, of the reasons for that; if so, the current staffing establishment, and the details of the repair works undertaken by such staff members in the past five years (including (i) the dates on which such works were undertaken, (ii) the names (if any) of the trails concerned, (iii) the problems addressed by the repair works, and (iv) the difficulties encountered in the repair process);

(4) given that all of the several recent fatal accidents which involved hikers falling from a height happened at spots far away from existing trails, how the authorities will step up public education and publicity, so that hikers will put primary emphasis on their personal safety, and refrain from taking risks in order to flaunt their ability; and

(5) whether the AFCD will step up publicity so that members of the public are aware of the availability of information on accident black spots in country parks on its website?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the Hon Kenneth Lau's question is as follows:

(1) There are about 80 hiking trails, with a total length of about 500 kilometres, under the management and maintenance of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) within country parks and special areas. These trails mainly include four long-distanced trails, a number of Country Trails of various lengths, Nature Trails that educate on ecology and cultural history, and Family Walks that provide for family enjoyment. The names, starting and end points of these hiking trails are listed in the Annex.

Apart from the above trails under the management of the AFCD, there are a number of other trails in Hong Kong, but the Government does not keep the information of all these trails. Relevant departments will construct and maintain trail sections under their jurisdiction according to the site conditions and specific needs.

(2) Hiking activities in country parks have become increasingly popular in recent years. With a view to promoting public awareness of trail protection, the AFCD has organised nine trail maintenance workshops for volunteers to participate since 2016. Through participating in the trails maintenance works, the members of the public gained more understanding of the causes of trail degradation and the difficulties of trail repairing works. About 200 volunteers joined these trail maintenance activities. Details of the activities are as follows:

Activity date	Name of hiking trail
November 26, 2016	MacLehose Trail Section 8 (Sze Fong Shan Section)
January 21, 2017	
February 11, 2017	
February 4, 2017	MacLehose Trail Section 3 (Kai Kung Shan Section)
February 5, 2017	
November 11, 2017	Ma On Shan Country Trail
November 12, 2017	
December 9, 2017	
December 10, 2017	

(3) Trail maintenance works in country parks are subject to various environmental constraints. The work sites are mostly located in the remote countryside where access and delivery of materials are difficult. Moreover, the use of large machineries should be avoided in order to minimise the disturbance to the natural environment. Therefore, most of the trail maintenance works have to be carried out bit by bit manually and carefully, leading to prolonged works period. The AFCD does not have dedicated staff only responsible for trail maintenance. Currently, trail maintenance works in country parks and special areas are carried out by the frontline staff of the 20 management centres of the AFCD. They are multi-tasked to cover a wide variety of duties such as afforestation, hill-fire prevention and fighting, facilities construction and maintenance, etc. for which they have received prior technical training. As a large number of

trail maintenance works of various scales had been carried out during the last five years, we have difficulty in providing the detailed information such as the manpower involved, dates and name of the trail sections repaired. However, it was noted that most of these trail maintenance works covered the repairing of trail surface, construction of steps and providing drainage to reduce soil erosion.

(4) A number of government departments are involved in publicising and promoting hiking safety. The AFCD regularly organises promotional activities to raise awareness on hiking safety, including exhibitions and game booths at shopping malls and Country Parks Visitor Centres, and disseminates safety message through television announcements, website and pamphlets. The AFCD all along encourages hikers to use trails that are managed and maintained by the Department while hikers should not explore new routes on their own or hike on unmaintained paths to prevent accidents. The AFCD promotes Long Distance Trails, Country Trails, Family Walks and Nature Trails through the "Enjoy Hiking" website and mobile application. The mobile application provide information of hiking routes, including the level of difficulty of the routes, for the reference of hikers by taking into account the length, gradient, surface condition and time required for completing the journey. Individual hikers and hiking groups could make use of the information to plan for a suitable hiking route according to their physical fitness and experience. The AFCD also sets up information boards and directory signs at suitable locations in country parks to provide trail information and to remind visitors of hiking safety. Warning signs have also been erected in areas which are more dangerous, in particular those with previous record of severe accidents, to alert hikers not to go there. The AFCD will also review the measures from time to time, modify the existing warning signs and install additional ones where needed.

In addition, the Fire Services Department (FSD) has posted safety hints on mountain activities, including information on hiking routes, weather conditions, clothing and gears, on the Department's website for public information. The FSD would publicise such messages through various safety activities. The Civil Aid Service (CAS) held the Launching Ceremony of the Hiking Safety Promotion Campaign with several government departments and mountaineering organisations at Pak Tam Chung P.H.A.B. (Physically Handicapped and Able-Bodied) Site in Sai Kung in May 2017 and have launched a series of promotional activities on hiking safety. These include distributing "Hiking Safety Checklists" and promotional materials at the starting points of popular hiking trails, organising talks and promoting through multimedia such as the Security Bureau's mobile application "Safeguard HK" on hiking safety and accident handling procedures. The CAS also held the Mountaineering Safety Promotion Day with various government departments and mountaineering organisations in October 2017 at Southorn Playground in Wan Chai to enhance the public's awareness of hiking safety at mountaineering activities. The Police from time to time publicise messages on safety issues, which the public should pay attention to when going on hiking, through the Police Magazine programme and the Police's Facebook page. A total of three episodes of the Police Magazine programme related to hiking safety were broadcast in 2017, while five posts on hiking safety were also uploaded to the Police's Facebook.

(5) After consulting the CAS, the AFCD has listed a number of high risk locations in country parks to remind hikers that these locations are more dangerous and with previous record of serious

and fatal accidents. Hikers should avoid going to these high risk locations which are tabulated below:

<b>Country park</b>	<b>Name of high risk locations</b>
Shing Mun	Tai Shing Stream
Lion Rock	Lion Rock Peak
Sai Kung East	Sharp Peak Quadruplex Pool Yin Tsz Ngam
Plover Cove	Bride's Pool Waterfall
Lantau South	Kau Nga Ling area Shui Lo Cho
Lantau North	Wong Lung Stream Nei San Stream (near Nei Lak Shan Country Trail)
Pat Sin Leng	Hsien Ku Fung Ping Nam Stream
Tai Mo Shan	Tai Shek Stream
Ma On Shan	Tiu Shau Ngam area The cliff at Fei Ngo Shan (also known as Suicide Cliff)
Lantau North (Extension)	Nei San Stream (also known as Mo Tin Ngai)

The relevant information of high risk locations has been uploaded onto the "Enjoy Hiking" website for the reference of hikers in planning their hiking routes. The information will be updated from time to time as necessary. Details of the locations can be found at [www.hiking.gov.hk/fatal\\_and\\_accident\\_case/index\\_en.htm](http://www.hiking.gov.hk/fatal_and_accident_case/index_en.htm). The AFCD will continue to keep the public informed of such high risk locations and the potential risk through various media and channels.

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**Hiking Trails under Management and Maintenance of AFCD**

<b>Name of Hiking Trail</b>	<b>Starting Point</b>	<b>End Point</b>
<b><u>Long Trail</u></b>		
MacLehose Trail	Sai Kung Pak Tam Chung	Tuen Mun
Hong Kong Trail	Victoria Peak	Tai Long Wan, Hong Kong Island
Lantau Trail	Mui Wo	Mui Wo
Wilson Trail	Stanley Gap Road	Nam Chung
<b><u>Country Trail</u></b>		
Cheung Sheung Country Trail	Hoi Ha Road	Yung Shue O
Chi Ma Wan Country Trail	Shap Long Campsite	Shap Long Campsite
Fan Lau Country Trail	Lantau Trail Section 7 (to Fan Lau Tung Wan)	Fan Lau Village
High Junk Peak Country Trail	Ng Fai Tin	Tai Mui Au
Hok Tau Country Trail	Hok Tau Road	Hok Tau Road
Hong Pak Country Trail	Quarry Bay Management Centre	Mount Parker Road
Kap Lung Ancient Trail	Tsuen Kam Au	Lui Kung Tin
Keung Shan Country Trail	Tai O Road	Kau Leng Chung Catchwater
Lau Shui Heung Country Trail	Lau Shui Heung Reservoir	Lau Shui Heung Reservoir
Lo Fu Tau Country Trail	A Po Long (Olympic Trail)	Lo Fu Tau
Luk Wu Country Trail	Sai Kung Sai Wan Road	Pak Tam Road Yee Ting
Lung Ha Wan Country Trail	Tai Hang Tun	Lung Ha Wan

<b>Name of Hiking Trail</b>	<b>Starting Point</b>	<b>End Point</b>
Lung Mun Country Trail	Chuen Lung	Pineapple Dam
Ma On Shan Country Trail	Ma On Shan Barbecue Site	Tai Shui Tseng
Nam Chung Country Trail	Nam Chung	Tan Chuk Hang
Nei Lak Shan Country Trail	Dong Shan Fa Mun	Dong Shan Fa Mun
Pak Tam Country Trail	Pak Tam Au	Pak Tam Road Yee Ting
Ping Chau Country Trail	Ping Chau Pier	Ping Chau Pier
Plover Cove Reservoir Country Trail	Wu Kau Tang	Tai Mei Tuk
Pottinger Peak Country Trail	Shek O Ma Tong Au	Cape Collinson Road
Shek Pik Country Road	Wisdom Path, Ngong Ping	Shek Pik Catchwater
Sheung Yiu Country Trail	Sheung Yiu	Sai Kung Man Yee Road
South Lantau Country Trail	Nam Shan	Tong Fuk Catchwater
Tai Lam Chung Country Trail	Ma On Kong Warden Post	Kat Hing Bridge
Tai Tam Country Trail	Wong Nai Chung Reservoir Park	Wong Nai Chung Reservoir Park
Tai Tan Country Trail	Hau Tong Kai	Hoi Ha Village
Tei Tong Tsai Country Trail	Tung Chung Road	Tei Tong Tsai
Wong Lung Hang Country Trail	Sheung Tung Au	Wong Lung Hang Road
Wu Kau Tang Country Trail	Wu Kau Tang Tin Sam	Bride's Pool Road

<b>Name of Hiking Trail</b>	<b>Starting Point</b>	<b>End Point</b>
Yuen Tsuen Ancient Trail	Tsuen Wan Ha Fa Shan	Tai Tong Barbecue Site
Yuen Tun Country Road	Tsing Lung Tau	Kat Hing Bridge
<b><u>Nature Trail</u></b>		
Aberdeen Nature Trail	Lower Aberdeen Reservoir	Upper Aberdeen Reservoir
Bride's Pool Nature Trail	Bride's Pool	Bride's Pool
Eagle's Nest Nature Trail	Tai Po Road	Tai Po Road
Hung Mui Kuk Nature Trail	Hung Mui Kuk	Catchwater
Lai Chi Wo Nature Trail	Lai Chi Wo	Lai Chi Wo
Ma Shi Chau Nature Trail	Sam Mun Tsai	Ma Shi Chau
Pak Tam Chung Nature Trail	Tai Mong Tsai Road Fuk Hing Bridge	Sheung Yiu Folk Museum
Pat Sin Leng Nature Trail	Tai Mei Tuk Management Centre	Bride's Pool
Pineapple Dam Nature Trail	Pineapple Dam	Pineapple Dam
Rotary Park Nature Trail	Rotary Park	Route Twisk
Tai Tong Nature Trail	Tai Tong Barbecue Area	Tai Tong Management Centre
Tai Lam Nature Trail	Tai Tong	Tsing Lung Tau
Tai Po Kau Nature Trail	Tsung Tsai Yuen	Picnic Site No.1 Tai Po Kau Nature Reserve
Tsiu Hang Nature Trail	Lions Nature Education Centre	Lions Nature Education Centre Insectarium
Twisk Nature Trail	Tsuen Kam Au	Tsuen Kam Au

<b>Name of Hiking Trail</b>	<b>Starting Point</b>	<b>End Point</b>
<b><u>Family Walk</u></b>		
Chuen Lung Family Walk	Chuen Lung Barbecue Area	Chuen Lung Barbecue Area
Fung Hang Family Walk	Fung Hang	Bride's Pool Road
Ho Pui Family Walk	Ho Pui Village	Ho Pui Village
Hok Tau Family Walk	Hok Tau Reservoir	Hok Tau Reservoir
Kam Shan Family Walk	Kam Shan Road	Kam Shan Road
Ma On Shan Family Walk	Ma On Shan Barbecue Area	Ma On Shan Barbecue Area
Pak Tam Chung Family Walk	Pak Tam Chung Barbecue Area Car Park	Pak Tam Road
Pok Fu Lam Family Walk	Pok Fu Lam Reservoir Management Centre	Pok Fu Lam Reservoir Road
Sheung Yiu Family Walk	Sheung Yiu	Tai Mong Tsai Road
Tai Mei Tuk Family Walk	Tai Mei Tuk	Tai Mei Tuk
Tai Mo Shan Family Walk	Rotary Park	Rotary Park
Tai Tam Family Walk	Tai Tam Reservoir Road (near Parkview Mansions)	Tai Tam Reservoir Road (near Tai Tam Upper Reservoir)
Wong Shek Family Walk	Wong Shek Pier Bus Station	Wong Shek Pier Bus Station