

For information

**Legislative Council
Panel on Welfare Services**

**Emergency Relief Services
Provided by the Home Affairs Department
During Typhoons and Major Emergency Incidents**

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the emergency relief services provided by the Home Affairs Department (“HAD”) at the district level during typhoons and major emergency incidents.

Emergency Relief Services

2. During typhoons or major emergency incidents, HAD and its District Offices (“DOs”) provide short-term relief measures to members of the public at the district level. Details are set out in paragraphs 3 to 9 below.

Typhoons

3. When Tropical Cyclone (“TC”) Warning Signal No. 3 or higher is in force, HAD will activate a 24-hour emergency hotline to provide information on emergency services (e.g. addresses and locations of temporary shelters), handle enquiries/requests from members of the public and make appropriate referrals to relevant Government departments, etc.

4. Where a TC Warning Signal No. 8 or higher is forecast by the Hong Kong Observatory (“HKO”) in respect of an encroaching tropical cyclone, the following measures will be taken –

- (a) HAD will appeal, through Rural Committees and the Property Management Services Authority, to residents in the rural areas, property management companies and households in buildings/estates managed by these companies to take precautionary measures against strong winds and flooding;

- (b) At the district level, DOs will disseminate the same message through the networks of District Councils, Area Committees, District Fight Crime Committees, District Fire Safety Committees, owners' corporations, owners' committees, mutual aid committees and resident liaison ambassadors, etc. to seek their assistance in reminding residents to pay attention to the latest information on inclement weather conditions from HKO and take precautionary measures against strong winds and flooding;
 - (c) Moreover, DOs will liaise with the Drainage Services Department to pay close attention to black spots and low-lying areas which may have serious flooding and take precautionary measures as appropriate;
 - (d) DOs will also contact residents and village representatives in flood prone areas for early alerts and support on precautionary measures, and closely monitor the situation; and
 - (e) DOs will, where necessary, open temporary shelters in advance before the issue of TC Signal No. 8 to accommodate people in need.
5. Following the issue of TC Warning Signal No. 8, DOs will provide the following assistance and services to people in need as expeditiously as possible, taking into account the circumstances on the ground –
- (a) Setting up a District Emergency Coordination Centre (“DECC”) in each of the 18 districts to monitor closely the situation, and report major incidents to HAD headquarters and the Emergency Monitoring and Support Centre (“EMSC”) of the Government Secretariat¹, etc.;
 - (b) Referring to relevant Government departments/utilities companies any urgent need in carrying out emergency repairs to restore essential services (such as water supply, electricity supply, transport and telecommunication services);

¹ EMSC is the Government Secretariat's main monitoring and support centre during a widespread or major emergency that may seriously affect public order or public safety. EMSC itself is not an operational co-ordination or command centre. As a coordinating, monitoring and support centre for the Government during a major emergency, it discharges its role by collecting and collating updates from other Government departments, whilst other departments maintain their own emergency centres or contact points and discharge their own functions. EMSC will be activated if a TC Warning Signal No. 8 or higher is issued or a major territory-wide emergency incident occurs.

- (c) Opening temporary shelters² for the people in need. The number and location of shelters are decided having regard to the circumstances on the ground. Blankets, mattresses, potable water, dry food and cup noodles are provided for people taking refuge in shelters; and
- (d) Offering cash grants to needy families or individuals to help tide over short-term economic hardship (please refer to paragraph 9 below for more details).

6. The Headquarters Emergency Coordination Centre (“HQECC”) of HAD will be activated after the issue of TC No. 8 Signal or higher³. Apart from maintaining the 24-hour emergency hotline referred to in paragraph 3 above, HQECC also acts as a channel of communication with DECCs of DOs and EMSC, if activated. HQECC collates situation reports from DECCs and compiles overall situation reports for the Information Services Department and EMSC. Where appropriate, HQECC also serves to assist DOs in discharging their emergency functions by securing assistance from voluntary agencies (e.g. Civil Aid Service) and/or other Government departments.

Major emergency incidents

7. When major emergency incidents (e.g. fatal traffic accident with heavy casualties, no. 3 alarm fire or above) occur at the district level, DOs of HAD will promptly arrange for the following assistance and services –

- (a) Setting up a DECC to monitor closely the situation, and keep the HQECC and EMSC (if activated) updated on the latest developments;
- (b) Setting up an inter-departmental help desk in collaboration with relevant departments such as the Social Welfare Department (“SWD”) and the Hong Kong Police Force (“HKPF”) at the scene, hospitals or other suitable locations to coordinate emergency relief and other assistance provided by different Government departments,

² Temporary shelters mainly refer to community halls/community centres managed by DOs and are, where necessary, supplemented by school premises, kaifong welfare association, town halls, village offices, recreation centres, etc.

³ HQECC will also be activated when a Red or Black Rainstorm Warning Signal or a Landslip Warning is issued or on occurrence of a major territory-wide emergency incident (e.g. the Lamma vessel collision incident in 2012).

disseminate information to relatives or friends of those who have been evacuated or hospitalised, answer public enquiries, etc.;

- (c) Opening temporary shelters to accommodate temporarily those who have been rendered homeless due to the need to evacuate or to be displaced urgently from the scene; and
- (d) Offering cash grants to needy families or individuals to help tide over short-term economic hardship (please refer to paragraph 9 below for more details).

Follow-up actions

8. In the aftermath of a typhoon or major emergency incident, DOs will refer the cases of those who have welfare, accommodation and other needs to relevant Government departments such as SWD and Housing Department for follow-up. DOs will also relay improvement measures proposed by local stakeholders to relevant Government departments and monitor the progress of implementing those measures accepted by the departments.

Relief Grant and Other Financial Assistance

9. HAD administers the General Chinese Charities Fund and Special Aid Fund through the grant of cash relief (of up to \$12,000 and limited to one grant per family) by DOs to those in financial distress.⁴ The Funds are intended for needy families or individuals when necessary help cannot be obtained in time for application to another source of fund, and for relieving immediate financial hardship for victims of typhoon or other natural disaster or emergency incident.

Advice Sought

10. Members are invited to note the content of this paper.

Home Affairs Department
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⁴ The General Chinese Charities Fund and the Special Aid Fund provide emergency cash relief to Hong Kong residents of Chinese race and non-Chinese race respectively.