

For Discussion on
13 November 2018

Legislative Council
Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene
Post-Typhoon Follow-Up Efforts under the Purview of
the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the follow-up efforts, including street cleansing, management of cemetery facilities and testing of fish tank water samples, by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) in the aftermath of super typhoon Mangkhut in mid-September 2018.

Background

2. Mangkhut was the most powerful typhoon¹ striking Hong Kong over the past few decades. It caused extensive damage and brought about a huge amount of debris and fallen trees². The follow-up work is indeed extremely challenging and requires more time and resources than previous typhoons.

3. In order to respond effectively to typhoons and other natural disasters, the Government follows the Circular on Contingency Plan for Natural Disasters (CPND) which sets out the Government's alert system and

¹ Mangkhut's maximum sustained wind speed near centre reached a peak of 250 kilometres per hour and brought severe storm surge to the territory.

² Up to 22 October 2018, government departments received a total of 60 894 reports of fallen trees.

organisational framework for emergency responses as well as the functions and responsibilities of each government department and other organisations³.

Clearance Work in Public Places

4. The clearance of fallen trees in public places after the strike of typhoons involves cutting of trees and removal of the branches and twigs cut, the responsibilities of which are defined clearly within the Government. Generally speaking, FEHD is mainly responsible for removing the branches and twigs cut by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department on public roads in the urban area. Other departments and venue management will also cut the trees and remove the branches and twigs on the roads and venues under their respective purviews.

5. As mentioned above, there were a great amount of tree collapses caused by Mangkhut, and departments have enhanced communication and worked closely after the typhoon to effectively mobilise resources and set priorities, with a view to completing the clearance of fallen trees as soon as possible. Apart from the urban area under its original purview, FEHD has also strived to deploy manpower to assist other departments when needed in removing the branches and twigs cut in the New Territories.

6. In deploying Government resources for removal of debris and fallen trees, top priority was accorded to areas which posed imminent hazards to the public and major thoroughfares⁴ impeding traffic flow. The Government also targets to complete the clearance work as soon as possible for vehicular roads in major business districts, roads connecting facilities such as slaughterhouses or refuse collection points, school areas, carriageways or

³ In addition to CPND, every relevant department has its own detailed operational plans/instructions to guide its decisions and operation.

⁴ HyD had cleared and reopened all major thoroughfares and roads leading to/from bus depots on 18 September 2018. Most of the remaining roads blocked by fallen trees were cleared and reopened on or before 22 September 2018. All the roads had largely been cleared by early October 2018.

pavements near populated areas or where people commute, as well as coastal areas etc.

7. Apart from the follow-up work within its purview under the existing response mechanism, FEHD has also taken the initiative to deploy additional manpower as well as vehicles and joined hands with relevant departments (including the Civil Aid Service) and volunteers to clear up debris and fallen trees at key areas. After the passage of Mangkhut, FEHD deployed 8 000 staff each day for removal of fallen trees and street cleansing. FEHD has cleared a total of over 10 000 tonnes of typhoon debris and delivered another 295 lorry-times of tree waste to the temporary wood waste collection area in the Kai Tak Development Area as of 22 October 2018. Some 620 sites of blocked carriageways or pavements near populated areas or where people commute as stock-taken by FEHD a week after passage of the typhoon have largely been cleared.

8. To maintain environmental hygiene, FEHD has been focusing its resources to first handle the fallen twigs and leaves near populated areas and on or beside pavements. As regards the coastal areas under the purview of FEHD, post-typhoon clearance work has been ongoing. After the typhoon, FEHD has provided assistance for some remote areas or those with special needs, including Kat O, Ap Chau, Tap Mun, Tung Ping Chau, Tung Lung Island, Shek O and Deep Water Bay etc.

Management of Cemetery Facilities

9. Since there might be landslides and tree collapses inside cemeteries under inclement weather, there has been potential risk to the graves. After the passage of Mangkhut, FEHD and contractors' staff inspected facilities inside cemeteries. If graves are found to be damaged by landslides or tree collapses, follow-up actions will be taken as appropriate under the existing mechanism.

Between the passage of Mangkhut and the Chung Yeung Festival, FEHD has not received any special serious incident report.

Monitoring of Fish Tank Water

10. After passage of Mangkhut, the Drainage Services Department informed FEHD that damages were found at the Sai Kung Sewage Treatment Works and three sections of sewage rising mains in Southern District on Hong Kong Island near Deep Water Bay Beach and Shek O Beach, leading to the leakage of sewage⁵. Thereafter, FEHD stepped up surveillance on restaurants, fresh provision shops and market stalls in Sai Kung District and Southern District by testing fish tank water samples⁶. From 17 September to 2 November, FEHD has attested a total of 116 fish tank water samples in the two Districts and all samples were found to comply with the standards. FEHD will continue monitoring the situation.

Way Forward

11. The Chief Executive has tasked the Security Bureau to coordinate a review of the handling of such super typhoons, which covers contingency response plans, post-typhoon recovery and restoration as well as external and internal information dissemination. FEHD and other relevant departments are currently participating in the review.

⁵ The sewage by-pass at Sai Kung Sewage Treatment Works ceased on 24 September 2018, and the repair to the broken rising mains at Southern District were completed on 29 September 2018, and sewage discharge ceased on 29 September 2018.

⁶ The scope of testing include the following bacteria: (a) Escherichia coli and (b) Vibrio cholerae.

Conclusion

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

Food and Health Bureau

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