

Application deadline for Squatter Occupants Voluntary Registration Scheme extended

The Lands Department (LandsD) announced today (December 15) the extension of the application deadline for the Squatter Occupants Voluntary Registration Scheme (the Scheme) to December 31, 2024.

A spokesperson for the LandsD said, "In view of the Government's continuous intensified effort to resume land for implementing various development projects, it decided to extend the Scheme to allow more time for occupants residing in squatter structures for non-domestic uses to register, so as to benefit from the rehousing and compensation arrangements in development clearances."

Under the Scheme launched on November 1, 2018, persons would be eligible to register if they are able to prove that they started residing in licenced non-domestic structures or in squatter structures recorded for non-domestic uses in the 1982 Squatter Control Survey (collectively referred to as "non-domestic squatter structures") on May 10, 2018, or before. Occupants of non-domestic squatter structures who have successfully registered may apply for rehousing and compensation if they are affected by the Government's development clearance exercises in future. For persons residing in licenced domestic structures or in squatter structures recorded for domestic uses in the 1982 Squatter Control Survey (collectively referred to as "domestic squatter structures"), they are not required to register under the Scheme in order to apply for rehousing and compensation during development clearances.

The spokesperson said, "As non-domestic squatter structures should not be used for domestic purposes, persons residing in such squatter structures were not eligible to apply for rehousing and compensation in the past. The Government announced on May 10, 2018, the enhancement of the rehousing and compensation arrangements for occupants of squatter structures, and introduced the Scheme to allow persons already residing in non-domestic squatter structures at that time to apply for registration, such that persons successfully registered may apply for rehousing and compensation when being affected by government development clearances in future. Not only does the Scheme secure the identity of registered households which may apply for rehousing and compensation, it also helps discourage others from moving to reside in non-domestic squatter structures as well as curb related speculative activities. As of September 30, 2023, over 900 households had already successfully been registered."

Upon the implementation of the Scheme and in order to minimise duplicated procedures, for occupants of non-domestic structures who have been covered by a Pre-clearance Survey (also known as freezing survey) conducted by the LandsD for the relevant development project, if they fulfil the above

registration eligibility (i.e. already residing in the non-domestic squatter structure on or before May 10, 2018), they would be automatically deemed to be successfully registered under the Scheme without having to submit registration applications separately. As of now, over 200 households of non-domestic squatter structures who were deemed successfully registered have been offered rehousing and compensation due to government development clearances.

The spokesperson said, "The Scheme aims to handle rehousing and compensation matters for households residing in non-domestic structures in a more humane way in order to provide them with appropriate assistance. The LandsD reiterates that the department would tolerate the use of non-domestic squatter structures for domestic uses for households successfully registered under the Scheme. Having said that, the structures concerned are still required to comply with other requirements governing the licenced or surveyed squatter structures under the relevant licences and/or the prevailing squatter control policy, including the prohibition against any extension or addition, as well as unauthorised alteration."

Guidance notes and application forms for the Scheme can be downloaded from the LandsD's website (www.landsd.gov.hk/en/land-mgt-enforce/squatter-control/one-off-squatter-occupants-voluntary-registration-scheme.html), and will be made available via District Lands Offices, Clearance Offices and Land Control Teams/Land Enforcement Teams of the LandsD, and at Home Affairs Enquiry Centres of the Home Affairs Department. For enquiries, please call 2231 3392 or email to vrs-cu@landsd.gov.hk.