

Building Safety Symposium 2024 held (with photos)

More than 400 building professionals, property management practitioners, government officials and academics attended the Building Safety Symposium organised by the Buildings Department (BD) at the Y-Theatre, Youth Square, Chai Wan today (November 1) to exchange views on the application of innovative technologies to enhance building safety as well as the safety of construction works.

Speaking at the symposium, the Secretary for Development, Ms Bernadette Linn, said as a regulator, the Government must provide a legal framework that meets the needs of the society. The Government is conducting a comprehensive review of the Buildings Ordinance in three major areas, including encouraging owners to expedite building repairs; rationalising the enforcement policy on unauthorised building works (UBWs); and regulating more effectively the quality and safety of building works. The main approach of the review is to increase penalties while lowering prosecution threshold and rationalising enforcement priorities. A public consultation on specific proposals is expected to be launched by the end of this year, with relevant legislative amendment proposals to be submitted in the first half of 2026. In addition, the Government has actively adopted innovative technologies to enhance enforcement and work efficiency, including using new technologies such as drones and artificial intelligence to speed up building inspections, strengthening enforcement against UBWs and defective signboards, and enhancing site safety. The Government will also soon put forward elderly-friendly building design proposals to tie in with the aging in place policy. To promote Building Information Modelling technology, the Government has announced a roadmap for the preparation and submission of building plans, which is generally supported by the industry, with a view to making it mandatory for the private sector to adopt the technology in 2029. The Government will continue to work with the industry to make preparations.

In her welcoming speech, the Director of Buildings, Ms Clarice Yu, said that regarding the adoption of innovative technologies, the BD will continue to implement and enhance the Electronic Submission Hub and commence the consultancy study and consult stakeholders on the full adoption of Building Information Modeling by the private sector for preparation and submission of plans for the BD's approval. The BD has introduced mandatory measures since July this year requiring the adoption of two alert systems of the Smart Site Safety System for superstructure works with an estimated construction cost over \$30 million, and is exploring the feasibility of extending the systems to other types of works; and to use drones and artificial intelligence for regularly conducting special inspections on the external walls of higher-risk buildings. All these measures are the BD's efforts to leverage smart technologies to facilitate building design and construction, enhance site safety, and promote preventive maintenance of existing buildings.

Ms Yu said that the BD will continue to apply its professional expertise and innovative approach and work together with the industry to create a safer and sustainable built and living environment.

The Building Safety Symposium is a highlight event of Building Safety Weeks 2024. The theme of this year's symposium is "Building for Our Future: Smart Technologies for Building Safety and Sustainability". In the symposium, a number of local experts spoke on the following topics:

- Extreme Weather in Hong Kong – the Past and the Future;
- The 2°C Impact on Building Safety;
- Smart Management for Safe Construction;
- The Role of Modern Technologies in Construction Safety;
- Promoting Elderly-friendly Building Design;
- Application of New Quality Productive Forces in Enhancing Safety and Sustainability in Building Management;
- Transforming Public Housing Management with Smart Technologies; and
- Enhancing Building Safety in Hong Kong: Challenges and Effective Strategies.

In addition to the above speeches, the symposium also featured two panel discussion sessions. An innovative technology booth was set up in the venue's foyer to demonstrate how the BD utilises drones and artificial intelligence to assist in inspecting the external walls of old buildings.

An award ceremony for the Exploring Livable Communities – Short Video Competition under the Building Safety Pioneer Programme and the Building Facade Design Competition was also held today at the same venue. The two competitions aimed to encourage students and members of the public to participate in building a more liveable city and to understand that building maintenance and repair are closely related to daily life.

In addition, the BD will hold the Building Safety Carnival on November 9 and 10; and November 16 and 17, at Tuen Mun Town Plaza and Olympic City 2, respectively. This carnival will serve as the finale of this year's Building Safety Weeks, allowing the public to acquire proper building safety knowledge in a fun and engaging way through game booths.

