

Clean up work continues apace in wake of Super Typhoon Mangkhut

A spokesman for the Government said today (September 21) that Government departments and their contractors will continue their follow-up work over the weekend following the passage of Super Typhoon Mangkhut, including removing fallen trees and debris and repairing damaged facilities.

Details are as follows:

Leisure facilities, parks and beaches

After the passage of typhoon, a total of 17 000 fallen trees under the Leisure and Cultural Services Department's (LCSD) management have to be removed. Staff of the LCSD and contractors immediately inspected the trees under the department's management and arranged trimming and clearing of those affected. Priority has been given to clearing fallen trees and broken branches which may cause obstruction to roads affecting traffic and pedestrians to allow access to main roads as soon as possible. The department is deploying about 900 staff and workers of its contractors every day to remove fallen trees to ensure public safety. In view of the extensive and severe damage caused by the typhoon to trees in all districts, the department will continue to deploy more manpower to handle the work to minimise the risk and inconvenience that may be caused to the public.

As of noon today, 12 land-based leisure facilities, four campsites, three water sports centres and all gazetted beaches under the management of the LCSD are still temporarily closed as more time is needed for clearance and repair works. In addition, some parks and outdoor facilities are partially open as some of the facilities are damaged and trees have collapsed. Members of the public are urged not to enter cordoned off areas for safety's sake. For those who plan to enjoy the moonlight at LCSD's outdoor venues should refer to the department's announcements on the affected venues. The LCSD will continue its effort to conduct clearance and repair works with a view to reopening the facilities for public use as soon as possible.

Facilities of all LCSD's beaches have been seriously damaged by the typhoon and all beaches are still temporarily closed until further notice. Red flags have been hoisted at the beaches. Members of the public are advised not to swim, barbeque, enjoy the moonlight or participate in other activities at the beaches for the sake of safety. The beaches will be reopened to the public after completion of thorough clearance and repair works.

Street cleansing

In the aftermath of Super Typhoon Mangkhut, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) immediately deployed extra manpower and vehicles

for the clearance of waste and debris. From September 17 to 20, about 8 000 staff including civil servants and workers engaged by contractors, were deployed each day to remove typhoon debris which included fallen twigs and leaves, as well as other cleansing services. Over the past four days, the FEHD has cleared some 1700 lorry loads of typhoon debris with a total weight of around 4 000 tonnes.

The FEHD will continue to keep a close watch on the situation and work hand in hand with relevant government departments. Priority will be accorded to major thoroughfares, carriageways of central business districts, school areas, access roads to refuse collection points, residential areas and non-gazetted beaches for clearance of debris, and every effort will be made to complete the cleansing work as soon as possible. Owing to the heavy rain brought about by Super Typhoon Mangkhut, the public should remove stagnant water, rubbish and disused articles as soon as possible to eliminate mosquito breeding grounds thoroughly.

Waste and sewage treatment

Super Typhoon Mangkhut slammed into Hong Kong, generating huge amount of broken or fallen trees and other debris. The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has deployed more resources and manpower to various waste handling facilities and refuse transfer stations (RTS), increased the marine trips for transferring waste between the West New Territories (WENT) Landfill and RTSs, disseminated information on waiting time at RTS and other important messages through waste-hauling representatives associations, and flexibly extended the operation hours of all RTSs (excluding the Outlying Island Transfer Facilities) as follows:

Island East Transfer Station: until 1.30am
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Shatin Transfer Station: until 1am
West Kowloon Transfer Station: until 1am
North Lantau Transfer Station: until 00.30am
North West New Territories Transfer Station: until 9pm

To give priority to clearing tree waste and to improve the waiting time of waste collection vehicles at various RTSs, the Government has set up a temporary wood waste collection area in the Kai Tak Development Area (the Collection Area). The public may deliver broken trees and branches (without any municipal solid waste) to the Collection Area for temporary stockpiling. No prior appointment for using the Collection Area is required. The Collection Area will be open from today (September 21) round the clock until 6pm on September 30. Thereafter, it will open daily from 9am to 6pm until further notice.

The EPD will take out a portion of the stockpiled materials suitable for processing into compost or for use by the Organic Resource Recycling Centre Phase I situated at Siu Ho Wan. Starting from tomorrow (September 22) until further notice, members of the public who are interested in using such materials may register with the EPD by calling the hotline (3741 1823 or 3741

1822) from 9am to 5pm.

Following Super Typhoon Mangkhut, the Sai Kung Sewage Treatment Works were found to be seriously damaged and it will require several months to resume its full secondary treatment service. At present, the Drainage Services Department (DSD) has arranged an additional process to disinfect the primary-treated sewage, and will install a temporary pipe in about one to two weeks' time to divert the disinfected sewage into a submarine outfall for dispersed discharge and dilution. To further improve the situation, the DSD also intends to install some temporary facilities in four weeks' time to upgrade the treatment process to chemically enhanced primary sedimentation level. In addition, the pressurised sewage pipes at Mills and Chung Path, Deep Water Bay Barbecue Area and Tai Tau Chau of Shek O were also damaged, leading to the discharge of sewage. The repair works are expected to complete within three weeks.

The LCSD announced on September 17 the temporary closure of Kiu Tsui Beach, Trio Beach, Hap Mun Bay Beach, Deep Water Bay Beach and Shek O Beach. The DSD and the EPD are arranging to conduct seawater sampling and testing at locations close to the Sai Kung Sewage Treatment Works and the above beaches, and will release the results at the DSD's website. The public are advised to avoid recreational activities, angling or seawater abstraction in the potentially affected sea or waterfront areas at Inner Port Shelter and the aforementioned beaches.

In addition, although seaward areas along the shoreline of Sai Kung are not prohibited from extracting seawater for rearing live marine fish intended for human consumption, given the circumstances that the seawater quality there may have been affected, restaurant operators should consider using synthetic seawater by mixing marine salt and tap water for rearing live marine fish instead. The trade should also ensure the proper operation and maintenance of the filtration and disinfection facilities for fish tank water, in order to maintain the seawater quality for rearing marine fish at a satisfactory standard.

Waterworks

The Water Supplies Department (WSD) has completed emergency repair works at most of the waterworks damaged or affected by power outages during the Super Typhoon Mangkhut. However, many parts of the pipe network providing fresh water supply to Tap Mun, Kat O and Ap Chau were damaged. The WSD has completed some of the emergency repair works, but for damaged water mains located in remote areas, the blockage of access caused by fallen trees or other factors has added difficulties to these repair works. The WSD will continue to carry out repair works as soon as possible. At present, the fresh water supply in Tap Mun has been resumed. While fresh water supply to Kat O and Ap Chau has not yet been resumed, the WSD has been providing bottled water to residents during the water suspension period. The WSD has also arranged delivery of water tanks today to strengthen temporary water supply in the area.

The WSD noted that fresh water supply to some individual housing estates had been suspended due to damage to their inside service. The WSD has contacted the management offices of these housing estates and has provided temporary water supply to residents (e.g. water wagons, water tanks or stand pipes).

Slopes

The Geotechnical Engineering Office (GEO) has received and followed up a total of 19 landslide incidents. These slopes currently pose no imminent danger while the respective repair and restoration works have already commenced. However, if members of the public discover imminent danger of any slope, please report to the Police and stay away from the slope concerned. Other landslide incidents should be reported to the Government Hotline 1823.

Trees

The super typhoon has caused huge amounts of tree deformation and breakage. The Tree Management Office (TMO) of the Development Bureau has asked tree management departments to immediately carry out site inspection and undertake precautionary measures, such as removing hanging branches and unstable trees, guying or cordoning off trees pending remedial works, in a timely manner to protect public safety. Tree management departments have inspected most of the trees in high traffic and high pedestrian flow areas. The TMO has also reminded private property owners, owners' corporations and property management companies to do the same. In the case of any imminent danger caused by trees, members of the public are requested to make a report to the Police. Other tree cases should be reported to the Government Hotline 1823.

Transport

Super Typhoon Mangkhut has brought about severe damage to the public transport network and facilities (including railways, roads and piers). Since the small hours of September 17 when Typhoon Signal No. 8 was in force, the Transport Department (TD), the Highways Department (HyD), the Civil Engineering and Development Department, the Fire Services Department, the Architectural Services Department, the Marine Department, the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD), the WSD, the FEHD and public transport operators have been working at full strength, including repairing road surface and traffic lights, clearing blocked roads, etc, so as to restore public transport services. The Transport and Housing Bureau has been co-ordinating the departments under its ambit and maintaining close liaison with the Security Bureau to carry out disaster recovery work.

On sea transport, from September 17, all inner and outer harbour ferry routes have resumed normal service except for the North Point-Hung Hom route, as the Hung Hom Pier is still under repair. It is expected that the North Point-Hung Hom route will resume service tomorrow (September 22).

As regards land transport (including franchised bus, public light bus,

Light Rail, trams), for the past few days, the HyD deployed 730 workers on average to conduct clearance works in all districts. Priority was given to works relating to the prompt resumption of public transport services. For example, major roads, roads leading to bus depots, roads connecting railway stations and roads in the areas with no alternative routes were given top priority. The HyD has liaised with the TD at all times to ensure that the clearance work was conducted in an orderly manner.

Meanwhile, the TD co-ordinated with the EMSD on the morning of September 17 to start repair work for 184 damaged traffic lights. The repair work was completed on September 19.

As regards bus services, one bus route is still suspended. It is expected to resume service tomorrow.

While road traffic has generally returned to normal, some localities are still affected by fallen trees and there will still be small-scale diversions of some bus routes. Motorists, especially private car drivers and commercial vehicle drivers, are advised to pay attention to the road conditions. They should exercise tolerance and patience and drive carefully. The HyD and the TD will continue to work at full strength to clear the remaining fallen trees and other obstacles on roads.

Repair works on school premises

Before Super Typhoon Mangkhut struck Hong Kong, the Education Bureau (EDB) had been closely monitoring the situation and requested schools to take precautionary measures. In view of the fact that Super Typhoon Mangkhut brought varying degrees of impact to schools and to ensure the safety of students, the Education Bureau announced class suspension of all schools on September 17 and 18, considering that some schools needed time to clean up and do repair works on their premises and facilities and that it would take time for public transport services to return to normal. Almost all schools resumed classes on September 19 after the cleaning up and repair works. As of today, classes at four schools remained suspended but are expected to resume next week.

The EDB has all along maintained close contact with schools and the sector to understand their needs and to provide support. The bureau has provided urgent assistance to affected schools in tackling various matters, including arranging its consultants and contractors to promptly remove facilities damaged by strong wind and which might pose immediate danger, as soon as weather permitted, and have commenced emergency repair works for more than 320 aided schools over the last couple of days. In view of the special situation, the EDB said yesterday that a special grant would be provided to public sector schools and Direct Subsidy Scheme schools to help them pay the costs to be incurred by the cleaning up, repair works and the replacement of standard facilities and equipment as a result of the typhoon. Kindergartens which have joined the Kindergarten Education Scheme will also be covered. Details will be provided next week. Schools in need can apply to the EDB having regard to their own situation. The EDB will continue to maintain close

contact with schools and the sector and provide support.

Non-governmental organisations

The Social Welfare Department has contacted the 169 non-governmental organisations (NGO) that provide subvented social welfare services to better understand the impact of the typhoon on their service units. Among them, 17 service units of 12 NGOs had facilities affected by the typhoon to various degrees, leading to service suspension. Fifteen units and one unit resumed normal operation on September 18 and September 19 respectively, while the repair of the remaining unit is still in progress.

Community work

The Home Affairs Department (HAD) and various District Offices co-operated with the relevant departments to clear fallen trees, refuse and obstructive objects on roads. The District Offices arranged about 30 shuttle buses and two ferries in Sai Kung District, Southern District, North District and Yuen Long District to provide transportation services to the public and relieve traffic congestion.

The HAD and the District Offices also contacted construction companies and engaged term contractors under the District Minor Works Programme to mobilise large machinery and skilled workers to assist in clearing fallen trees. Among them 11 construction companies provided voluntary services. Moreover, taking into account the special circumstances in different districts, the respective District Offices also made appropriate arrangements. For example, Sai Kung District Office arranged an urgent meeting with a number of local organisations and the Marine Department to help solve the marine refuse problem.

Furthermore, about 1 000 members of the community and volunteers joined together in clearing refuse and fallen trees on roads, and also assisted the elderly in cleaning their homes, many of which were damaged by the typhoon. The Government thanked the construction companies who volunteered, term contractors and members of the community for their tremendous efforts and assistance in helping to restore normal operation to the community as soon as possible.

The Government spokesman thanked the public and community groups who had pitched in to help clean up the city this week, while emergency services focused on dealing with priority issues such as opening roads and clearing away dangerous trees.

“We welcome and appreciate very much the fact that people understand the huge cleanup task and have taken the initiative to lend a helping hand in their neighbourhoods. This shows the true Hong Kong spirit at work,” the spokesman said.