

[DH participates in WHO's IHR Exercise Crystal 2023 to enhance public health emergency preparedness and response \(with photos\)](#)

The Department of Health (DH), together with the Security Bureau (SB), the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF), the Fire Services Department (FSD) and the Hospital Authority (HA) today (December 5) participated in the annual International Health Regulations (IHR) Exercise Crystal organised by the World Health Organization (WHO)'s Regional Office for the Western Pacific (WPRO) to enhance public health emergency preparedness and response systems.

IHR Exercise Crystal, which has been held annually by the WPRO since 2008, is a functional exercise conducted virtually through video conference and other communication tools to test the communication of IHR focal points in terms of public health event reporting, verification, notification, communication and risk assessment, etc. The Centre for Health Protection of the DH, as an IHR focal point, has been participating in the exercise for years.

The simulated scenario of the IHR Exercise Crystal 2023 involved the emergence of a radiological incident. Today's exercise consisted of two parts. The first part was a table-top exercise during which a number of detailed communications were sent from the WHO providing information on the evolving scenario and triggering tasks for completion by the participants. Representatives from the DH, the SB, the HKPF, the FSD and the HA discussed and co-ordinated the response measures required in the simulated scenario of detection of a related event with implications to Hong Kong. The second part was a debriefing led by the WPRO with experience sharing by participants including representatives from Hong Kong.

The Government has formulated contingency plans responding to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) agent attacks and established a CBRN Incident Advisory Group, which is composed of specialised technical personnel from the HKPF, the SB, the FSD, the DH and the HA, etc. They hold regular meetings to discuss contingency plans and procedures for CBRN incidents. The Government is also committed to providing efficient arrangements to deal with related incidents.

A spokesman for the DH said, "The exercise provides an opportunity to test the preparedness of relevant parties in the local setting to respond effectively to a radiological incident, as well as enhancing communication between the DH and disciplinary forces under the SB."

"We will consolidate the experience gained from this exercise for reporting to the CBRN Incident Advisory Group to facilitate the latter to map out targeted and refined strategies in the future as appropriate," the

spokesman added.

