

Follow-up work regarding cable trunking coating in public works projects

With regard to media reports on the alleged use of cable trunkings with coating thickness not meeting the standard in Kwong Wah Hospital Redevelopment project under the Hospital Authority, the Architectural Services Department (ArchSD) today (November 16) said that it is following up the matter in conjunction with relevant government departments and public organisations responsible for public works projects.

A spokesman for the ArchSD said, "The Government takes the matter very seriously. The ArchSD, together with relevant government departments and public organisations, are following it up in a prioritised manner, with regard to approximately 148 ongoing works contracts involving cable trunkings, by taking samples and arranging testing and reporting by accredited laboratories, so as to verify the compliance with the contract requirements on coating. The sample testing of the first batch involving around 38 ongoing works contracts is expected to be completed within three to four weeks."

"If any non-compliance with the required coating thickness under the contract is found after testing, we will require the contractor of the relevant works contract to give explanations and make appropriate arrangements in accordance with contract terms. Such arrangements may include:

- without affecting the operation of the relevant facilities and in a prioritised manner having regard to actual circumstances, replacing the cable trunkings which do not meet the standard;
- for materials which cannot be replaced shortly (for example, replacement works would require prolonged fencing-off of certain areas in the facilities because of the cable trunkings' locations and areas, hence affecting public use), we will request the contractor(s) to take other practicable remedies including strengthening inspection and maintenance, etc.;
- the relevant government departments and public organisations will also claim the contractor(s) any additional expenses and losses incurred by the non-compliance of standard of the material in accordance with the contract terms.

If the follow-up reveals that criminal elements may be involved, the case will be referred to law enforcement authorities for further investigation," added the spokesman.

"The coating is used to cover the metal shell of cable trunking so as to

prevent rusting. It does not support any electrical conduction and signalling. Insufficient thickness might limit the durability of cable trunking but it has no risk of electrical leakage and does not pose any risks to the safety and health of the building users, the building's structure, fire safety and operations of the relevant government departments or public organisations," stressed the spokesman.

In view of the large number of construction materials involved in construction projects, government departments and public organisations have been adopting a risk-based approach in implementing corresponding inspection and acceptance procedures for different materials. According to the current practice, contractors are required to provide documentary proof (including manufacturer's certificate of accreditation to recognised Quality Assurance System and test report of the materials by accredited laboratories) to confirm compliance of the material with the specified standard. As coating of cable trunking does not affect structural safety of buildings and is not a major building component, the abovementioned documents are required without specification of the manner and form.

In view of the incident, the ArchSD has reviewed the abovementioned inspection and acceptance procedures. In conjunction with relevant government departments and public organisations, it would enhance the procedures for inspection and acceptance of coating of cable trunkings for their respective works projects as follows:

1. imposing more specific requirements for documentary proof from contractors on coating of cable trunking, including specifying that the manufacturer's certificate of accreditation to recognised Quality Assurance System submitted should have been issued within the past three years; and that the test report by an accredited laboratory submitted should show that the material tested is of the same batch as material used for the contract; and
2. considering that the incident concerns coating of cable trunkings, following the risk-based approach, on-site sample tests will be conducted as part of the inspection and acceptance procedures for coating of cable trunkings.

The spokesman added, "The abovementioned enhanced inspection and acceptance procedures will be included in the contracts of relevant ongoing and new works".