

LCQ12: Handling of emergency at Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge

Following is a question by the Hon Jeremy Tam and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Security, Mr Sonny Au, in the Legislative Council today (June 20):

Question:

According to the Inter-Governmental Agreement in respect of the Construction, Operation, Maintenance and Management of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, signed by the governments of Hong Kong, Guangdong Province and Macao in 2010, the three said governments will adopt the "territoriality principle" in respect of the operation and management of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB). The three governments will handle various issues within their own jurisdictions in accordance with the respective local laws. Regarding the rescue arrangements for incidents that have occurred on the Hong Kong Link Road (HKLR) of HZMB, which is within Hong Kong's jurisdiction, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) when an incident involving personal injuries has occurred on a lane (i) in the Hong Kong-bound direction and (ii) in the Mainland-bound direction of HKLR, of the respective routes to be taken by ambulances (a) going from the ambulance depot(s) to the scene and (b) conveying the injured persons from the scene to the North Lantau Hospital (NLH);

(2) whether the ambulance routes mentioned in (1) will involve travelling on the shoulder in the opposite direction of the traffic; if so, whether there are measures in place to ensure traffic safety; if there are such measures, of the details and whether such measures include temporarily closing off the lane adjacent to the shoulder; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) of the journey distance of conveying injured persons from a section of HKLR closest to the boundary to NLH, and the respective estimated journey times during rush and non-rush hours;

(4) when a traffic accident involving a number of injured persons has occurred at a section of HKLR closest to the boundary, making it necessary for ambulances to divert some of the injured persons to public hospitals other than NLH (such as the Princess Margaret Hospital), of (i) the journey distances and (ii) the estimated journey times of conveying the injured persons from the scene to such hospitals respectively;

(5) of the circumstances under which the authorities will arrange for the Government Flying Service to send helicopters to convey injured persons from HKLR to public hospitals; and

(6) whether the authorities have plans to arrange for maritime rescue teams

to take part in the rescue operations on HKLR; if so, of the details (including the government departments involved)?

Reply:

President,

Emergency rescue departments in Hong Kong will draw up emergency and rescue plans and conduct drills in response to possible emergencies at the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) Main Bridge, Hong Kong Link Road (HKLR) or Hong Kong Port. The rescue departments in Hong Kong, Macao and the Mainland will also establish a liaison mechanism and keep in close contact for co-ordination and mutual support when necessary, so as to ensure prompt and appropriate care to casualties.

Having consulted the relevant departments, my reply to various parts of the Hon Jeremy Tam's question is as follows:

(1) & (2) Should there be any emergency at the HKLR involving vehicles heading to Hong Kong, ambulances will attend the scene by making a U-turn at one of the turnaround facilities (one near San Shek Wan and the other on the HZMB eastern artificial island) depending on the incident location to offer emergency ambulance service to casualties. The casualties will be conveyed to Hong Kong hospitals for treatment after being handled at the scene.

Under the same principle, in case of emergencies at the HKLR involving vehicles heading to Zhuhai, ambulances will take the Zhuhai-bound lane to attend the scene. Upon handling the casualties at the scene, ambulances can make a U-turn back to Hong Kong at the turnaround facility near San Shek Wan or the one on the HZMB eastern artificial island and convey the casualties to hospitals for treatment.

Whether it is necessary for the rescue vehicles to run in the opposite direction of the traffic on the HKLR when performing duties will be determined in the light of the actual circumstances and needs. Where necessary, the Police will offer assistance to facilitate the ambulances to attend the scene soonest possible for safely conveying the casualties to hospitals.

(3) & (4) The driving distance for conveying casualties from the boundary between Hong Kong and Guangdong of the HZMB to the North Lantau Hospital (NLH) is about 20 km.

If the incident involves a large number of casualties, the Hong Kong Fire Services Department (FSD) will divert the casualties to different hospitals for treatment in accordance with the triage system established with the Hospital Authority. This system is well-tested as it was established having regard to past experience of major incidents and the reviews conducted afterwards.

The actual travelling time from the boundary between Hong Kong and

Guangdong of the HZMB to the NLH or other hospitals is subject to numerous factors. The FSD will work closely with other departments to ensure that the ambulances will be able to convey the casualties to hospitals for treatment in a rapid and safe manner.

(5) One of the major responsibilities of the Government Flying Service (GFS) is search and rescue operations. If there is a need for assistance in an incident, particularly when the traffic is so packed at the scene, the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF) and the FSD may request the GFS for assistance in the rescue operation, including providing air ambulance service under safe conditions, conveying the casualties to hospitals for treatment or transporting personnel, tools and kits, medical supplies, etc. to facilitate the rescue operation.

(6) If maritime search and rescue is needed, relevant departments (including the Marine Department (MD), the HKPF and the FSD, etc.) will carry out rescue operations under the "Contingency Plan for Maritime and Aeronautical Search and Rescue". The Maritime Rescue Co-ordination Centre of the MD is responsible for co-ordinating the search and rescue operations. Where necessary, the marine departments of Guangdong and Hong Kong will conduct joint search and rescue operations in accordance with the existing cooperation mechanism.