

## LCQ12: Hiking safety

Following is a question by the Hon Yiu Si-wing and a written reply by the Secretary for the Environment, Mr Wong Kam-sing, in the Legislative Council today (May 30):

Question:

Some members of the public have relayed that the difficulty levels of hiking trails graded by different community groups according to different standards may result in inexperienced hikers having difficulties in appreciating the actual difficulty levels of the trails, making them susceptible to danger. Although the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) had erected warning signs in more precarious areas within country parks to alert hikers not to go there, a number of incidents in which hikers got into danger and were injured or killed still occurred in such locations in recent years. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective numbers of cases in which hikers (i) sought help, (ii) were injured and (iii) were killed after getting into danger in each of the past three years (set out in the table below);

Year	(i)	(ii)	(iii)
2015			
2016			
2017			

(2) whether it has considered grading the difficulty levels of all trails for the reference of hikers in deciding the routes they go hiking; if so, of the details (including the criteria used); if not, the reasons for that;

(3) given that a fatal drowning accident occurred at Quadruplex Pool in Sai Kung early this month even though the area had already been put on a list of high risk locations by AFCD, whether the authorities have considered taking more effective measures (including reviewing the locations and contents of existing warning signs), with a view to reducing the occurrence of accidents at high risk locations; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) given that green tourism has become increasingly popular, whether the authorities have considered setting the professional requirements to be met by docents and guides of green tour groups (such as the basic knowledge for leading a tour group and first aid skills), so as to ensure the personal safety of tour group members; if so, of the details, if not, the reasons for that?

Reply 1/4

President,

Replies to the Hon Yiu Si-wing's enquiries are as follows:

(1) According to the records of the Fire Services Department, the numbers of mountain search and rescue calls received and casualties involved in the past three years are tabulated below:

Year	Number of calls received	Number of people injured	Number of deaths
2015	1 314	213	10
2016	1 443	269	7
2017	1 372	175	15

(2) The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) all along encourages hikers to use hiking trails that are managed and maintained by it and advises hikers not to open up new routes or hike on unmaintained paths to avoid accidents. To assist hikers to plan for a route that suits the interest, physical strength and level of difficulty of individuals or group members, the AFCD has taken into account the length, gradient, surface condition and time required for completing the journey to evaluate the overall level of difficulty of various hiking trails managed by the AFCD, including Long Distance Trails, Country Trails, Family Walks and Nature Trails. Hikers may obtain such information at the "Enjoy Hiking" website ([hiking.gov.hk](http://hiking.gov.hk)) or the mobile application. Moreover, the AFCD also sets up information boards and directory signs at suitable locations in country parks to provide trail information to hikers.

(3) Apart from uploading relevant information of high risk locations with records of serious or fatal accidents in country parks to the "Enjoy Hiking" website, the AFCD has also erected warning signs near locations of potential danger to alert hikers not to go there to avoid accidents. In respect of Quadruplex Pool at Sheung Luk Stream in Sai Kung, the AFCD have also erected warning signs at the pool side to remind visitors of the potential danger there. Upon a recent review of the warning signs on site, the AFCD will replace the warning signs with a sterner tone and adjust their locations to remind visitors more explicitly the potential danger of Quadruplex Pool and seriousness of the previous accidents. The AFCD will also review the measures at other locations from time to time, modify the existing warning signs and install additional ones where needed.

In addition, the AFCD will continue to strengthen the publicity and promotion of hiking safety to the public and collaborate with the Civil Aid Service (CAS). The CAS will deploy its members to the relatively high risk locations in country parks to convey the message of hiking safety to visitors and to raise public awareness.

(4) Under the current Tourist Guide Accreditation System implemented by the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong (TIC), tourist guides will only be

granted a tourist guide pass unless they have met specified qualification requirements, completed pre-service training and passed TIC's examination. The qualification requirements include possession of a valid first aid certificate or attendance certificate. The pre-service training includes a compulsory module of "Eco Tour and the Tour Guiding Skills", which equip pre-service tourist guides with general guiding skills on walking tours, as well as knowledge about ecotourism (including characteristics of ecotourism, the ecological environment in Hong Kong, skills of organising eco tours, etc.). Furthermore, tourist guides with passes are required to participate in the Continuing Professional Development Scheme for Tourist Guides as a prerequisite for pass renewal, to maintain and upgrade their professional knowledge, skills and ethics.

To enhance the service quality of the travel industry, TIC has rolled out the Training Programme Subsidy Scheme under the Government's funding since early 2018 to subsidise training bodies to organise training activities, including those on green tourism. Out of the three activities approved so far, two pertain to green tourism, featuring specialised guiding skills on the hiking trails and rural areas that carry tourism merits respectively.