

LCQ14: Repairs and maintenance of public roads

Following is a question by the Hon Yung Hoi-yan and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (March 20):

Question:

I have received a number of complaints alleging that in Hong Kong, quite a number of footpaths have uneven surfaces and footpaths paved with paving blocks have paving blocks loosened and damaged, which make pedestrians (especially the elderly, children and persons with disabilities) prone to trip and fall. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of (i) the number of complaints or reports received by the Government about the surfaces of footpaths being uneven or damaged, (ii) the number of incidents with casualties arising from such situations, and (iii) the number of claims lodged by members of the public for compensation of such casualties and the amount of compensations involved, in each of the past three years, with a breakdown by District Council district;

(2) of the Government's follow-up procedure and work upon receipt of the complaints or reports mentioned in (1), and the performance pledge it has set in this regard; the respective numbers of cases in the past three years in which the performance pledge was met and was not met, the reasons why the performance pledge was not met in some cases, and the improvement measures put in place;

(3) of the (i) arrangements (including the numbers of scheduled and unscheduled inspections), (ii) staffing establishment and (iii) annual expenditure in respect of the inspections on the conditions of footpaths and the relevant repair works currently undertaken by the Highways Department; the respective dates on which the last and the next reviews of the relevant work arrangements was/will be conducted;

(4) whether it will allocate additional resources and manpower in the coming three years to step up the inspections on the conditions of footpaths and the relevant repair works; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(5) whether it has examined the main causes for the uneven and damaged surfaces of footpaths, as well as the correlation between such situations and the workmanship of and materials used in the construction of footpaths; if so, of the outcome, and the specific improvement measures put in place; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Highways Department (HyD) attaches great importance to the repairs and maintenance of the public roads (including footpaths) and ancillary facilities within its ambit. Regular inspections of public roads territory-wide are conducted and repairs and maintenance are carried out timely to keep the roads in good condition and to ensure the safety of road users.

My reply to the various parts of the Hon Yung Hoi-yang's question is as follows:

(1) In the past three years, the number of complaints received by the HyD about damaged footpaths and, among them, the number of cases in which members of the public sustained injuries and lodged claims for compensation are tabulated below (with breakdown by District Council district):

Complaints about damaged footpaths:

	2016	2017	2018
Central and Western District	476	546	545
Eastern District	444	442	367
Southern District	114	150	165
Wan Chai	420	506	512
Kowloon City	272	324	379
Kwun Tong	140	86	137
Sham Shui Po	407	443	482
Yau Tsim Mong	1 200	1 080	1 040
Wong Tai Sin	100	116	118
Tsuen Wan	233	227	258
Kwai Tsing	206	206	197
Sai Kung	151	146	131
Sha Tin	256	281	245
Tai Po	105	147	144
North District	246	203	216
Tuen Mun	173	210	171
Yuen Long	450	448	407
Islands District	53	74	70
Total	5 446	5 635	5 584

The number of cases in which members of public sustained injuries due to damaged footpath and lodged claims for compensation:

	2016	2017	2018
Central and Western District	3	3	2
Eastern District	1	1	2
Southern District	0	1	0
Wan Chai	1	3	1
Kowloon City	1	0	1
Kwun Tong	1	1	2
Sham Shui Po	1	1	2
Yau Tsim Mong	2	3	2
Wong Tai Sin	2	2	1
Tsuen Wan	1	1	1
Kwai Tsing	1	2	1
Sai Kung	0	1	1
Sha Tin	0	3	0
Tai Po	2	1	1
North District	0	1	1
Tuen Mun	1	1	2
Yuen Long	2	3	1
Islands District	1	0	0
Total	20	28	21

In general, upon receipt of a claim for compensation, the HyD will firstly refer the case to the contractor concerned for investigation. The HyD will monitor the investigation progress and examine its findings. If after investigation it is concluded the incident was attributable to the fault of the contractor, the contractor or their insurance company will liaise with the claimant direct to make arrangement for compensation in accordance with the established procedure. The HyD does not have information in regard to the amount of compensation involved. If after investigation the contractor considers and the HyD agrees that the contractor has adequately fulfilled their contract obligations, the contractor will promptly notify the claimant of the investigation outcome. These cases generally do not involve compensation.

(2) Upon receipt of a complaint or report on uneven surface of footpath, the HyD will carry out assessment and take prompt and appropriate follow-up action in relation to the footpath surface in need of repair (such as fencing off the relevant road section and conduct inspection in the surrounding areas) and complete the repairs as soon as possible. Owing to the varying extent of footpath damage in each case and hence the different scale of repairs, the HyD has not drawn up a performance pledge for maintenance of surfaces of footpaths.

(3) Subject to the location and pedestrian flow of the footpaths concerned, the HyD will arrange for regular inspection (at an interval ranging from seven days to three months) of footpaths within its ambit. Appropriate maintenance will be conducted where necessary to ensure that the footpaths remain in good condition. Moreover, the HyD will perform a detailed inspection for public roads (including footpaths) territory-wide at a six-month interval, in which road surfaces and structures will be inspected and the data collected will be used for planning of maintenance works for footpaths in the medium and long term. Road inspection is part of the district administration and road maintenance work of the HyD. As this is among its regular duties, there is no detailed division in its staff establishment.

(4) The HyD has arranged for, via eight maintenance contracts at present, contractors to conduct regular inspection of the conditions of all public roads (including footpaths) in Hong Kong and to perform the rehabilitation/reinstatement works required. The HyD will review the existing resources and manpower from time to time to ensure that the roads are kept in good condition for safeguarding the safety of road users.

(5) With the prolonged use of footpaths, stepping could gradually develop between adjacent paving blocks. The common causes are excessive loading on the footpaths by frequent loading/unloading of heavy articles or illegal parking of vehicles, poor reinstatement by the contractors of public utilities or government departments after excavation works, etc. To enhance the stability of sand bedding, the HyD has adopted as a standard practice the addition of a small amount of cement to the sand bedding since 2008. Being able to effectively address quite a lot of stepping problems, this practice would be adopted as appropriate in re-laying works to be conducted progressively having regard to the degree of wear and tear of footpaths in various districts. Moreover, geogrids (Note) will be used to reinforce the bedding of block paving subject to the actual conditions of the road sections concerned so as to effectively control stepping between the paving blocks.

Note: A geogrid is a net made of durable textile that can interlock with surrounding soil to reinforce the bedding. This technique can restrict stepping between the paving blocks to within a few millimetres.