

## LCQ14: Work of civil service lifeguards

Following is a question by the Dr Hon Elizabeth Quat and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Lau Kong-wah, in the Legislative Council today (June 19):

Question:

Regarding the work of civil service lifeguards under the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD), will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that candidates for civil service lifeguards must pass a trade test of skin-diving to a depth of two metres,

(i) of the current number of public swimming pools with a depth of more than two metres, broken down by District Council (DC) district in which the pool is situated and name of the public swimming pool complex to which the pool belongs; and

(ii) of the current number of public beaches provided with beach rafts, and set out a breakdown of such number and the names of the beaches concerned by DC district;

(2) of the rank of the officers who are currently responsible for supervising lifeguards in performing skin-diving and scuba-diving at beaches for carrying out duties such as search and rescue operations, as well as inspections of seabed conditions and clearance of objects after the onslaught of typhoons;

(3) whether LCSD has ensured that the supervising officers mentioned in (2) meet the qualification requirements for a diving supervisor (including having an adequate knowledge of the required diving mode and underwater work, possessing the experience required of a diver, as well as having received training on first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation and possessing the relevant experience); if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(4) whether the regular drills of lifeguards include skin-diving or scuba-diving to a depth of five metres; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(5) of the respective standard protective gear provided by LCSD for lifeguards for their (i) handling oil pollution and (ii) carrying out post-typhoon clearance work?

Reply:

President,

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) currently manages 44 public swimming pools and 41 gazetted beaches. Lifeguard services are

provided at all public swimming pools and 38 gazetted beaches. The reply to the Dr Hon Elizabeth Quat's question is as follows:

(1) Currently, the vast majority of LCSD's public swimming pools are swimming pools of two metres or less in depth, except diving pools and individual pool facilities. A breakdown of the pool facilities with a depth of more than 2 metres by District Council (DC) district is tabulated at Annex 1. Raft facilities are provided at 18 gazetted beaches managed by LCSD. A breakdown of these beaches by DC district is tabulated at Annex 2.

(2) and (3) The major responsibilities of civil service lifeguards of LCSD include lifesaving and first aid, assisting in law enforcement and maintaining order as well as assisting in cleansing work. The major responsibilities of senior civil service lifeguards include deputising for Amenities Assistants, supervising lifeguards in performing daily tasks, leading and performing lifesaving and first aid duties, providing training to lifeguards, assisting in implementing departmental drill programmes, etc. The entry requirements for senior lifeguards, include the compulsory attainment of a valid Beach Lifeguard Management Award and Pool Lifeguard Management Award or above from the Hong Kong Life Saving Society within the last three years, and the possession of a valid first aid certificate issued by the St. John Ambulance Association, Hong Kong Red Cross or Auxiliary Medical Service. They are also required to possess five years of lifesaving experience in public swimming pool, beach or water sports centre. Hence, they should have adequate knowledge and experience to lead rescue operations.

Underwater rescue by skin-diving is one of the basic skills and responsibilities of lifeguards' daily lifesaving work. Lifeguards deploy skills taught and assessed in the training associated with lifeguard qualifications, including underwater rescue by skin diving, etc., in drowning incidents. Upon receiving a report of suspected missing swimmer in beach water, lifeguards will carry out a search operation and the officer in-charge of the venue will report to the Police and ask the Fire Services Department (FSD) to deploy firemen to the scene to provide support. In addition to skin diving used in underwater rescue operations, trained and qualified lifeguards may carry out emergency underwater search for missing victim(s) using scuba diving equipment under the supervision of senior lifeguard and continue assisting in the rescue operation upon arrival of diving personnel of FSD where necessary.

Scuba diving is not a daily duty of lifeguards of LCSD. Contractors are normally hired by LCSD for tasks requiring diving for prolonged periods (e.g. underwater inspection or maintenance of facilities, etc.). For instance, two professional contractors have been engaged for the inspection and maintenance of shark prevention nets respectively, which involve the deployment of professional divers to carry out the work. Diving tasks involved in the inspection of seabed conditions and the clearance work in the aftermath of the passage of Typhoon Mangkhut in September 2018 were undertaken by outsourced contractors.

(4) LCSD has established guidelines requiring all lifeguards to participate

in regular rescue drills and drills for mobilisation plans at their workplace to ensure that they are familiar with the corresponding rescue operation under different circumstances. In addition to drills on swimming and physical fitness, emergency operation plan, resuscitation skills, use of first aid equipment, etc., the regular drill programme for lifeguards also includes rescue by skin-diving into the deep end of a pool or deep-water zone of a beach.

(5) One of the major responsibilities of lifeguards is to assist in cleansing work. In performing their daily cleansing work, lifeguards may be required to assist in cleaning up oil spill occasionally found at beaches or clearance work of beaches in the aftermath of typhoons. When LCSD is notified by the Marine Department of any oil spill incident near beach area or when department staff find signs of oil contamination of beaches, officers-in-charge of the beaches will lead lifeguards and venue staff to assist in handling oil spill, including monitoring whether beaches will be contaminated with oil spills, assisting and advising swimmers to go back to the shore, preventing dispersion of oil to beaches as far as possible with the use of materials such as oil absorbent strips, in accordance with LCSD's contingency plan for oil pollutions. Where oil spill is found in beach area, the officer-in-charge of the beach will contact and seek professional assistance from relevant departments in cleaning up the contaminated sand on the beach. Besides, LCSD will provide appropriate personal protective equipment, such as plastic gloves and boots, for lifeguards to carry out these tasks. All oil-contaminated waste, such as used oil absorbent strips and contaminated sand, etc., will be disposed of by contractors of the department concerned. Service contractors will be hired by LCSD to carry out inspection of the seabed conditions and the clearance work following serious damage caused to beaches by typhoons.