

LCQ2: Management of typhoon shelters

Following is a question by the Hon Steven Ho and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (November 7):

Question:

It has been reported that many vessels were stranded or capsized when super typhoon Mangkhut hit Hong Kong in September this year. Various types of vessel operators have said that the incident highlighted the problem of insufficient berthing spaces at typhoon shelters and their poor management. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows the occupancy rates of the various typhoon shelters and sheltered anchorages during the onslaught of Mangkhut (with a breakdown by vessel lengths permitted by typhoon shelters);

(2) given that whenever typhoons hit Hong Kong, some typhoon shelters are always full as many work boats and visiting vessels berth at such shelters, rendering it impossible for local vessels to berth at their homeport, how the Government tackles the problem;

(3) given that during the onslaught of Mangkhut, a number of vessels were damaged, were stranded or sank along the coasts of Sai Kung, whether the Government will improve the facilities of the Sai Kung Sheltered Anchorage (such as strengthening the breakwaters) to avoid the recurrence of similar incidents;

(4) given that according to my observations and those of various types of vessel operators, some vessels were not berthed at typhoon shelters in an orderly manner, and some work boats, being pushed by wind and waves, even bumped into other vessels because such boats were loosely moored, (i) how the Government ensures that vessels at typhoon shelters are berthed in an orderly and tidy manner and will not affect other vessels, and (ii) how it will strengthen the relevant publicity work;

(5) given that the number of various classes of vessels has been increasing incessantly in recent years, and that fishing vessels and pleasure vessels berthed in close proximity will easily collide with one another and give rise to compensation claims, whether the Government will study (i) demarcating the berthing spaces in typhoon shelters according to vessel type, (ii) expanding the various typhoon shelters, and (iii) solving the problem of insufficient berthing spaces and inadequate embarking and disembarking facilities for small fishing vessels; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(6) given that the Marine Department has, on a trial basis since August last year, designated a specific area within the Kwun Tong Typhoon Shelter for the exclusive mooring of non-pleasure vessels, of the progress and effectiveness of the measure, as well as the next course of action to be taken by the

Government; and

(7) although the Government has estimated that the supply of sheltered space across the territory could adequately meet the demand throughout the period from 2014 to 2030, the actual occupancy rates of the typhoon shelters located in relatively remote areas (e.g. Hei Ling Chau Typhoon Shelter) are rather low given the long plying time required, and the problem of insufficient berthing spaces in typhoon shelters remains, whether the Government will consider (i) conducting planning for typhoon shelters having regard to the demand for sheltered space on a district basis, and (ii) providing additional typhoon shelters in those districts where the highest occupancy rates of the existing ones have reached 90 per cent or above; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

My responses to the question raised by the Hon Steven Ho are as follows:

(1) The occupancy rates of typhoon shelters during the course of the super typhoon Mangkhut in Hong Kong are set out at Annex. The Marine Department (MD) does not maintain breakdown of occupancy rates by vessel lengths permitted in typhoon shelters.

(2) and (3) During the course of the super typhoon Mangkhut in Hong Kong, the MD disseminated information of typhoon shelters which were already full through radio and television broadcasts in accordance with the usual practice, so as to facilitate vessels to use other typhoon shelters for safe berthing timely. According to MD's records, among the 14 typhoon shelters in Hong Kong, three (namely Rambler Channel, To Kwa Wan and Tuen Mun Typhoon Shelters) had reached their full occupancy when the Typhoon Warning Signal No. 8 was hoisted during super typhoon Mangkhut in Hong Kong. There was still sheltered space available for use in the remaining 11 typhoon shelters, including the Aberdeen West, Cheung Chau and Shau Kei Wan Typhoon Shelters which were more frequently used by fishing vessels, as well as the Yim Tin Tsai Typhoon Shelter in Sai Kung. Having regard to the aforementioned utilisation, there is sufficient sheltered space in the Sai Kung district and across the territory in Hong Kong for local vessels to take refuge during typhoons.

The Civil Engineering and Development Department will commission a consultancy study lasting for about 18 to 24 months to conduct a comprehensive review of the low-lying coastal and windy locations as well as relevant storm surge and wave analysis, with a view to assessing the impacts of extreme weather to these areas. Based on the outcomes of the study, the Government will formulate appropriate protection measures including the options of improvement works and management measures to strengthen the resilience to wave impacts at the coastal areas.

(4) On management of typhoon shelters, all local vessels may enter and remain in any typhoon shelter at any time based on their own operational needs on a

first-come-first-served basis, except in special circumstances such as when vessels are carrying dangerous goods or when the length of a vessel has exceeded the length limit of the typhoon shelter concerned. However, a vessel shall not be anchored within the passage area of the typhoon shelter, nor should it obstruct the free access of other vessels to any unoccupied space in the typhoon shelter. During the course of the super typhoon Mangkhut, the MD staff carried out patrols in typhoon shelters to ensure that vessels were berthed in an orderly manner and that the passage areas were unobstructed. The MD staff also gave advice, direction and assistance to vessel operators to ensure that vessels could be anchored in an orderly manner at suitable locations in the typhoon shelters and take refuge at safe berthing spaces.

(5) to (7) The MD has taken note of the trade's concern that vessels of different classes (in particular pleasure vessels (PVs) and non-PVs) berthing in close proximity to each other within typhoon shelters may cause minor collisions leading to compensation claims. To minimise such occurrences, apart from carrying out patrols from time to time to ensure that vessels are berthed in an orderly manner and would not cause obstruction to other users, the MD has designated a specific area in the southern part of the Kwun Tong Typhoon Shelter for exclusive mooring of non-PVs on a trial basis. The MD has been closely monitoring the daily operation, utilisation and effectiveness of the measure. Based on initial observations, a certain number of PVs have accordingly been relocated to the northern part of the typhoon shelter for berthing. There are also berthing spaces available for use in both the northern part (for use of all classes of vessels) and the southern part (for use of non-PVs) of the typhoon shelter. Depending on the outcomes of the trial measure, the MD will further consult the trade and consider the feasibility of applying similar arrangements in other typhoon shelters.

The Government is committed to ensuring that sufficient and suitable sheltered space is provided within the Hong Kong waters for local vessels to take refuge during typhoons or inclement weather so as to ensure the safety of these vessels and their crew members. Regarding the demand and supply of sheltered space in Hong Kong, the MD's latest regular assessment has shown that the overall supply of sheltered space in Hong Kong waters is sufficient in meeting the estimated demand from local vessels up till 2030. Sheltered space including gazetted typhoon shelters, sheltered anchorages and berthing facilities in marinas are located in different parts of Hong Kong waters to meet the berthing demand from local vessels.