

LCQ22: Manpower of Lifeguards

Following is a question by the Hon Luk Chung-hung and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Caspar Tsui, in the Legislative Council today (June 9):

Question:

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) employs not only civil service lifeguards but also non-civil service contract ("NCSC") lifeguards according to seasonal and operational needs for providing lifeguard services at its public swimming pools, gazetted beaches and water sports centres. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective strengths of the (i) civil service lifeguards and (ii) NCSC seasonal lifeguards under the LCSD at present, and their respective percentages in the relevant staffing establishments;

(2) of the total number of drowning cases which occurred at the public swimming pools, beaches and water sports centres under the LCSD in each of the past three years and, among such cases, the number of those in which the number of lifeguards on duty at the scenes at the relevant time was less than the relevant staffing establishment; and

(3) whether it has plans to expeditiously conduct a grade structure review for lifeguards and enhance the remuneration package of the grade, so as to retain lifeguards and attract new blood to the grade; if so, of the details and work schedule; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) currently provides aquatic or water sports facilities at 44 public swimming pools, 38 gazetted beaches and five water sports centres. My reply to the questions raised by the Hon Luk Chung-hung is as follows:

(1) The lifeguards employed by the LCSD include civil service lifeguards and seasonal lifeguards employed during the swimming season. As at June 1, 2021, there were 1 372 civil service lifeguards (including senior lifeguards) and 214 seasonal lifeguards in the LCSD. Details are at Annex I.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the LCSD's swimming pools were closed between December 2020 and March 2021. The selection interview and trade test for seasonal lifeguards for this year, originally scheduled during this period, were also suspended. As some public swimming pools and beaches have been reopened starting from April 2, 2021, the selection interview and trade test for seasonal lifeguards have been resumed. The recruitment exercise is being expedited and the appointed lifeguards will report for duty gradually.

(2) In the past three years from 2018-19 to 2020-21, there were a total of 219 rescue cases and seven drowning cases at the LCSD's public swimming pools, gazetted beaches and water sports centres at the time of service (see Annex II). When the incidents happened, there were sufficient lifeguards on duty at the public swimming pools and beaches involved. To ensure the safety of swimmers, the LCSD will provide sufficient lifeguards on duty at the public swimming pools while they are open for service as well as at gazetted beaches that are provided with lifeguard services.

(3) The lifeguards employed for providing lifesaving services at the LCSD's aquatic venues include lifeguards employed on a long-term basis and seasonal lifeguards employed during the swimming season. The former are mainly staff from the Artisan (Beach/Swimming Pool) (Ar(B/SP)) grade.

In accordance with the prevailing policy, the Government will only consider conducting a grade structure review for individual non-directorate civilian civil service grades when the following two criteria are met:

(a) the grades have proven and persistent recruitment and retention difficulties which cannot be resolved through the regular pay surveys under the "Improved Civil Service Pay Adjustment Mechanism"; or

(b) there are fundamental changes to the job nature, job complexity and level of responsibilities of the grades.

The LCSD has all along been adopting an open mind on conducting a structure review for the Ar(B/SP) grade. The LCSD is closely monitoring the recruitment situation this year with a view to gathering sufficient and objective data to explore the feasibility of initiating such review for the Ar(B/SP) grade.