

LCQ6: Suspension of fresh water supply in public rental housing estates

Following is a question by Hon Ho Kai-ming and a reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (February 27):

Question:

Quite a number of residents in public rental housing estates (estates) have relayed to me that in recent years, fresh water supply to the estates in which they reside was suspended on many occasions due to bursts of communal water mains, causing inconvenience to their daily lives. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective numbers of incidents of suspension of fresh water supply in each of the past five years that were caused by (i) bursts and (ii) leakages of communal water mains in the estates, and set out the duration of each incident by name of estate;

(2) given that aged water mains are more susceptible to bursts and leakages, whether the authorities will expeditiously and comprehensively replace the communal water mains in those estates aged 30 years or above, so as to minimize the occurrence of such incidents;

(3) whether master meters have been installed in all estates at present; if not, whether it has plans to install master meters in all estates to facilitate monitoring water losses in the communal water mains in the estates; if so, of the details and timetable; and

(4) whether the Water Supplies Department and the Housing Department have put in place a coordination mechanism to monitor the conditions of communal water mains in the estates and carry out timely repair and maintenance?

Reply

President,

Having consulted the Development Bureau and the Water Supplies Department (WSD), I set out my consolidated reply to various parts of the question raised by the Hon Ho Kai-ming as follows.

In respect of the water supply systems in the common area of public rental housing (PRH) estates, the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) has since 1995 gradually replaced the aged galvanised iron fresh water supply pipes by non-ferrous pipes under a large scale re-plumbing programme. The programme is currently generally completed. In addition, the HA conducts regular inspections on water supply systems and arrange contractors to carry out

maintenance and repair works in a timely manner to ensure their proper functioning. The HA also evaluates the condition of the systems annually for formulating appropriate maintenance arrangements and improvement programmes.

Since 2006, all new PRH estates with two or more building blocks have been installed with master meters as required by the WSD. The WSD is gradually installing master meters in other existing PRH estates. Currently, master meters have been installed in about 100 PRH estates. Installation works of the remaining about 80 PRH estates is targeted for completion by 2023.

The WSD has always been attaching great importance to the leakage problem of the water supply system in Hong Kong, including PRH estates. The WSD and the HA have put in place a regular communication mechanism for examining the general leakage situation of PRH estates; sharing the experience of handling of water leakage as well as maintenance and repair of water mains with a view to reducing the risk of water main bursts; following up the progress of installing master meters in the existing PRH estates; coordinating related works, etc. From time to time, the WSD advises the HA of the cases with suspected water leakages in underground communal water mains, so as to facilitate the HA to carry out necessary testing and to arrange timely repair. The WSD would also discuss with the HA the progress of relevant cases.

Since 2016, the WSD has referred to the HA about 30 suspected water loss cases in PRH estates. Among these cases, 2 were confirmed to be not related to the HA properties after examination. The HA has completed the follow-ups and repairs for 12 cases. The remaining 16 cases are being tested or repaired with the WSD's assistance. As our follow-up works are carried out at hours with less impact to the residents, the disruptions to the fresh water supply of the concerned estates are usually minimal. Both the WSD and the HA do not keep statistics on water supply interruption incidents resulted from pipe seepage and burst of common water mains in PRH estates.