

## LCQ8: Issue of cable trunking coating in public works projects

Following is a question by the Hon Doreen Kong and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Ms Bernadette Linn, in the Legislative Council today (January 31):

Question:

Regarding the issue of cable trunking coating in public works projects, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as the Hospital Authority (HA) confirmed in November last year that the cable trunking coating of the new building of Kwong Wah Hospital (KWH) failed to meet the standards, while the Architectural Services Department has advised that it will take samples of and conduct tests on cable trunkings with regard to approximately 148 ongoing public works contracts involving cable trunkings, and the testing of the first batch of around 38 works contracts is expected to be completed within three to four weeks, of the names of the approximately 148 works projects and the respective government departments and cable trunking suppliers involved in such projects;

(2) of the test results of the aforesaid first batch of around 38 works projects (including whether the standards were met and how the results deviated from the standards);

(3) as the aforesaid works projects to be tested do not include public works completed in recent years, and the media have pointed out that the problem of substandard cable trunking coating is also found in public works completed in recent years, whether the Government will extend the relevant tests to public works completed in recent years; if not, of the reasons for that; and

(4) as it has been reported that HA, in its initial response to the media regarding the cable trunking coating incident of KWH, advised that the principal contractor and a team of independent experts appointed by the principal contractor each conducted tests on the relevant cable trunking in the presence of HA staff, and the results of both tests were satisfactory, whether it knows the reasons why the cable trunking coating concerned still failed to meet the standard in the end, and whether HA has investigated if there was falsification or other problems involved?

Reply:

President,

(1) & (2) Regarding the alleged use of cable trunkings with coating thickness not meeting the standards in public works projects, the Architectural Services Department (ArchSD) explained in the press release of November 16, 2023 that insufficient coating thickness of cable trunkings may limit their durability, but it has no risk of electrical leakage and does not pose any

risks to the safety and health of the building users, the building's structure, fire safety and operations of relevant government departments or public organisations.

The ArchSD is following up the matter, together with relevant government departments and public organisations by taking samples and arranging testing. If any non-compliance with the required coating thickness of cable trunkings under the contract is found, we will require the contractor to give explanations and make appropriate arrangements in accordance with contract terms. Such arrangements may include:

- without affecting the operation of the relevant facilities and in a prioritised manner having regard to actual circumstances, replacing the cable trunkings which do not meet the standard;
- for materials which cannot be replaced shortly (for example, replacement works would require prolonged fencing-off of certain areas in the facilities because of the cable trunkings' locations and areas, hence affecting public use), we will request the contractor(s) to take other practicable remedies including strengthening inspection and maintenance; and
- the relevant government departments and public organisations will also claim the contractor(s) any additional expenses and losses incurred by the non-compliance of standard of the material in accordance with the contract terms.

With regard to the approximately 148 ongoing works contracts involving cable trunkings, relevant government departments and public organisations are arranging testing and reporting by accredited laboratories in batches. Since the testing is still in progress, if the lists of works contracts and suppliers or part of the test results, which are incomplete information, are released at this juncture, it may mislead the public into thinking that all works contracts on the list are affected by the incident. It is therefore inappropriate to disclose partial or incomplete information and analysis at this stage. We will announce the project list and results at an appropriate time upon completion of all testing and reporting.

(3) As regards government premises which are in use, the ArchSD follows up their repair and maintenance, including inspection of cable trunkings, in accordance with established mechanism. If any quality problems are found during routine inspections of cable trunkings, the contractor(s) concerned will be required to take follow-up actions pursuant to the contract terms. The contractor's responsibility for repair and maintenance to rectify the latent defects in the project remains valid for 12 years after completion of the project.

(4) It has been stipulated in the contracts for Kwong Wah Hospital (KWH) redevelopment project that the thickness of the cable trunking coating materials must comply with relevant standards, with testing by an accredited laboratory. In addition, the Hospital Authority (HA) also requires project contractors to strictly follow relevant regulations and to properly supervise the works so as to ensure the quality of works projects.

The two testing reports submitted by the project contractor earlier both showed that the thickness of the cable trunking coating complied with the standards. Subsequently, taking a very prudent approach, the HA also separately appointed an independent expert to, through an accredited laboratory, test and review the testing results submitted by the project contractor. After on-site inspection and assessment, the independent expert pointed out that since the preliminary testing may produce different results based on the instrument used and measurement location, there were uncertainties in the testing results of the project contractor. As such, the HA's personnel collected again cable trunking samples at KWH, as per the advice of the independent expert, for thorough testing by an accredited laboratory. The result determined that the thickness and weight of the cable trunking coating materials did not meet the standards.

The HA announced on November 16 last year the testing results conducted by the independent expert and corresponding follow-up actions. At this stage, there is no evidence suggesting that any negligence or fraud was involved during the initial testing.