



Chapter 5

Chapter 5

SERVICES PROVIDED BY RELEVANT

GOVERNMENT

DEPARTMENTS & PROFESSIONAL BODIES

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5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a general view on the roles of the Government and some concerned organizations in building safety and timely maintenance. Useful telephone numbers including enquiry and complaint hotline, fax numbers, addresses of their offices, email enquiries and websites are listed in Appendix 2. Readers are reminded to refer to the relevant websites of the Government (www.info.gov.hk), organizations and institutes for the most updated details on the contacts.

5.2 Government Departments

5.2.1 Buildings Department (BD)

(a) Scope of Professional Services

The BD administers Buildings Ordinance and offers professional services, in particular to:

- provide a 24-hour service to telephone enquiries on private buildings;
- provide emergency services on dangerous private buildings and slopes;
- review and set standards for building design and construction;
- vet building and structural plans for building development;
- inspect building works for compliance with approved plans and standards;
- monitor construction sites for safety;
- identify danger from buildings and slopes and take remedial action;
- remove dangerous advertisement signboards and dangerous appendages;
- combat and stop unauthorized building works ;
- abate sanitary nuisance from defective drains;



5.2 Government Departments

5.2.1(a) *Scope of Professional Services (continues)*

- issue license for oil storage installations and advise on suitability of premises for such use as restaurant, food business, school and child care centre;
- prosecute and discipline offenders for breach of the Buildings Ordinance and allied regulations; and
- promote timely maintenance of buildings by professionals through responsible building management.

(b) **Records of Completed Private Buildings**

Except for pre-war buildings and New Territories Exempted Houses, the Building Information Centre (BIC) of BD keeps copies of approved plans and occupation permits for all private buildings.

Such plans may be viewed by the public upon application. Certified true copies of such plans and occupation permits are available upon application with payment of the requisite fee. Application forms may be obtained from the BD at the reception counter on 12/F, Pioneer Centre, 750 Nathan Road or by downloading soft copies from the BD's homepage (www.info.gov.hk/bd).

(c) **Building Safety Loan Scheme**

The Building Safety Loan Scheme provides loans to individual owners of private buildings who wish to obtain financial assistance in carrying out voluntarily maintenance and repair works to reinstate or improve the safety conditions of their buildings and/or private slopes, or in compliance with statutory orders. Such works include building and slope repairs; maintenance and upgrading works on fire services installations, lift installation, electrical installation and gas risers; regular slope maintenance works; and removal of unauthorized building works.

(d) **Complaints**

The public can lodge complaints to the BD on the following aspects:

- Unauthorized Building Works / Dangerous Buildings / Dangerous or Unauthorized Advertisement Signboards
- Slope Safety
- Fire Safety

5.2 Government Departments

5.2.2 Civil Engineering Department (CED)

The Geotechnical Engineering Office of Civil Engineering Department provides free information services on slopes, community advisory services and guidance documents to assist private owners in setting up their own slope maintenance system and carrying out repair works for slopes.



(a) Slope Information

CED operates a computerized Slope Information System (SIS) for storing and maintaining the records of 54,000 registered man-made slopes and retaining walls in Hong Kong. A computer terminal is available in the Slope Safety Division on 7/F of the Civil Engineering Building for public access. The SIS contains useful information on slopes, including background information, physical conditions, landslide records, development boundaries and record photographs. An internet version (in both English and Chinese) of the SIS is also available at the Hong Kong Slope Safety Website (<http://hkss.ced.gov.hk>).

(b) Community Advisory Services

To enhance public's understanding of slope safety and private owners' acceptance of their slope maintenance responsibility, CED has set up a Community Advisory Unit (CAU) to provide advice and information on slope safety and maintenance matters to the public. The CAU organizes slope safety seminars for private slope owners and parties involved in slope maintenance. It meets private owners or their representatives who have received Dangerous Hillside Orders and Advisory Letters to advise them on how to proceed with the necessary slope works. It also organizes 'meet-the-public' events in popular shopping centres, public meeting places and District Offices.

(c) Slope Safety Hotline (2885 5888)

The Slope Safety Hotline provides information on matters relating to slope safety and slope maintenance for free public access.

5.2 Government Departments

5.2.3 Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD)

- (a) The EMSD provides a range of consultancy and value-added engineering and maintenance services to ensure that the many systems that keep Hong Kong up and running continue to do so effectively and efficiently. The department serves the airport, hospitals, schools, security forces, transport and highways, port and harbour as well as public recreation and leisure facilities, areas that make up the very fabric of life in Hong Kong.



Within the community, the department issues guidelines and Codes of Practice and administers the safety ordinances on the safe use of gas, electricity, lifts and escalators, tramways and amusements rides among others. Safety message is taken to the public via publications and promotional programs as well as a number of educational and safety campaigns, which range from safety talks and carnivals, road shows and roving exhibitions, games and competitions for the general public to industry seminars and conference support for more specialized audiences. At the same time, it is actively involved in promoting energy efficiency and the protection of the environment through new services and activities both for their customers and the community, and through its support to the Government's environmental initiatives.

5.2.4 Environmental Protection Department (EPD)

(a) Functions

The Environmental Protection Department's wide-ranging functions include helping to formulate policy, enforcing environmental legislation, monitoring environmental quality, and providing collection, transfer, treatment and disposal facilities for many types of waste. On the other hand, it has an advisory function in dealing with the environmental implications of town plans or new policies that could have a significant adverse effect on the environment.



The department also handles enquiries and complaints about the environment. It also carries out inspection at construction sites. Generally, EPD deals with commercial noise while the Police Force deals with domestic noise.

5.2 Government Departments

(b) Waste Recycling

EPD has extended the Waste Recycling Campaign in Housing Estates to more than 700 estates. It has also worked with District Councils to promote recycling and reduction of waste.

(c) Environmental Resource Centres

2 Environmental Resource Centres (ERCs) have been established in Wan Chai and Tsuen Wan, providing public access to environmental information.

5.2.5 Fire Services Department (FSD)

(a) Educating the Public

The Fire Safety Command assists and advises the public on fire protection measures with a view to educate and enhance the awareness and fire protection knowledge of the general public.



The local fire stations are responsible for delivering fire safety lectures and seminars to all sectors of the community.

(b) Fire Safety Inspections

The Building Improvement and Support Division is responsible for carrying out follow-up inspection work on restoring fire safety in private buildings.

The Fire Service Installations Division and Ventilation Division are responsible for inspecting the fire services installations and ventilating systems in buildings respectively.

(c) Licensing

The three regional offices (Hong Kong, Kowloon and New Territories) are responsible for giving advice on the fire safety measures for the purposes of licensing premises for certain specific uses and issuing of Fire Safety Certificates.

The Dangerous Goods Division is responsible for licensing and complaint matters pertinent to dangerous goods.

5.2 Government Departments

5.2.6 Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD)

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department is responsible for the management of environmental hygiene services and facilities.



(a) Dealing with Water Seepage Complaints

If the water seepage matter cannot be resolved or settled between building owners, affected owners may approach the FEHD for assistance.

FEHD will make initial investigations on water seepage complaints.

FEHD will deal with seepage caused by leaking drainage pipes constituting a health nuisance under the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Chapter 132) and an abatement notice may be issued accordingly.

If necessary, FEHD will refer the case to the Water Supplies Department or the Buildings Department for action under the Waterworks Ordinance (Chapter 102) or the Buildings Ordinance (Chapter 123) as appropriate, against defective water supply pipes or certain building defects.

(b) Licensing Services

The following trades are required to apply for licences issued by FEHD:

- Restaurant and Provisional Restaurant Licence
- Bakery and Provisional Bakery Licence
- Cold Store and Provisional Cold Store Licence
- Factory Canteen and Provisional Factory Canteen Licence
- Food Factory and Provisional Food Factory Licence
- Flesh Provision Shop and Provisional Flesh Provision Shop Licence
- Frozen Confection Factory and Provisional Frozen Confection Factory Licence
- Milk Factory and Provisional Milk Factory Licence
- Siu Mei & Lo Mei Shop and Provisional Siu Mei & Lo Mei Shop Licence
- Restricted Food Permits

5.2 Government Departments

- Other Trade Licences, namely Commercial Bathhouse Licence, Funeral Parlour Licence, Offensive Trade Licence, Swimming Pool Licence and Undertaker's Licence
- Places of Public Entertainment Licence

In processing licence/permit applications, FEHD focuses on public health concerns. Depending on the type of licence applied, applications may need to be referred for comments of the Buildings Department and Fire Services Department on the building and fire safety aspects respectively. Other views may have to be sought whenever necessary.

5.2.7 Home Affairs Department (HAD)

(a) Role of HAD in Building Management



HAD has been actively promoting effective building management in private multi-storey buildings and assisting in the formation of OC and tackling management problems in such buildings. HAD and its District Offices perform an advisory and liaison role in providing assistance to OC at need, both prior to, during and after their formation.

(b) District Building Management Liaison Team

HAD has set up District Building Management Liaison Teams (DBMLT) in eighteen districts by stages since June 2001. The DBMLT proactively advise owners on building management matters. Also, they will follow the revised criteria formulated by the BD and HAD for targeting buildings for coordinated action and for expediting improvements to such buildings.

(c) Building Management Resource Centres (BMRC)

It offers the following services:

- Providing general advice on building management to the public. If the public requires professional advice, staff of the BMRC will arrange professional volunteers to meet them in the evening sessions.
- Organizing various publicity activities on building management and assisting other Government Departments in conducting such activities.
- Conducting seminars and workshops to disseminate the concept of proper building management to the public.

5.2 Government Departments

5.2.7 (c) *Building Management Resource Centres (BMRC) (continues)*

A list of reference materials available at the Building Management Resource Centres can be downloaded from BMRC's web site.

At present, there are seven professional bodies providing free professional advice at the BMRC to building owners and OC, namely:

- The Law Society of Hong Kong;
- The Hong Kong Society of Accountants;
- Hong Kong Association of Property Management Companies;
- The Hong Kong Institute of Housing;
- The Hong Kong Institute of Architects;
- The Hong Kong Institution of Engineers; and
- The Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors.

(d) **Fire Safety and Building Management**

Following the outbreak of several tragic fires in recent years, the Government attaches great importance to fire safety and building management on fire prevention and effective building management. To this end, District Fire Safety Committees, chaired by District Offices, comprising official and non-official members have been set up in 18 districts to promote and educate the public the importance of fire safety and effective building management.

5.2.8 **Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC)**

The ICAC provides the following comprehensive and free corruption prevention services to those responsible for building maintenance and management:

(a) **Formulating Corruption Prevention Guidelines**

Assisting building management organizations in formulating guidelines for their staff or members on the acceptance of advantages and conflict of interest.



5.2 Government Departments

(b) Improving System and Strengthening Control

Offering corruption prevention advice to plug corruption loopholes and enhance efficiency through system control and procedural improvements.

(c) Providing Corruption Prevention Training

Organizing talks for staff or members of building management organizations to explain the anti-bribery legislation, corruption problems and preventive measures relating to their work.

(d) Receiving Enquiries and Complaints

Handling enquiries and corruption complaints in strictest confidence.

(e) Publications

In addition, the ICAC publishes a 'Corruption Prevention Guide on Building Management' and 'A Guide on Financial Management for Owners' Corporations'.

5.2.9 Water Supplies Department (WSD)

(a) Principal Functions of the Department

- To plan and manage water resources and water supply systems
- To design and construct waterworks projects
- To operate and maintain water supply and distribution systems
- To control the quality of water supply to customers
- To provide consumer services and to enforce the Waterworks Ordinance



5.2 Government Departments

5.2.9 Water Supplies Department (WSD) (continues)

(b) Customer Services of WSD

- billing information
- changes of consumership, payment and others
- application for water supplies
- water supply matters such as water quality, weak water supply, discoloration of water, etc.
- provision of guidelines and advices on plumbing matters such as cleansing of fresh water storage tanks, employment of licensed plumber, maintenance of internal plumbing, etc.
- provision of guidelines and advices on installation of electric water heater and water purifiers

5.2.10 Others

(a) Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes Authority (MPFA)

The Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes Ordinance makes it compulsory for all employees, including caretakers, cleaners, electricians, etc., employed by OC, to join the Scheme.



The MPFA is responsible for :

- ensuring compliance with the Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes Ordinance;
- registering MPF schemes;
- approving qualified persons and companies to be approved trustees of registered schemes;
- regulating the affairs and activities of approved trustees and ensuring, as far as reasonably practicable, that those trustees administer the registered schemes in a prudent manner; and
- making rules or guidelines for the effective administration of MPF schemes.

5.2 Government Departments

(b) Labour Department (LD)

The Employment Ordinance (EO) applies to employees of OC or MAC who are employed under a continuous contract (whether it is made orally or in written).



The EO provides for the various conditions under a contract of employment, such as:


- termination of contracts;
- wages;
- statutory holidays;
- sickness allowance;
- year-end bonus;
- long service payment; and
- protection for employees;
- rest day;
- paid annual leave;
- maternity leave;
- severance payment;
- wages and employment records, etc.

For details on the EO, please refer to the publication "A Concise Guide to the Employment Ordinance" prepared by the Labour Department.

5.3 Professional Bodies

Building professionals are mainly architects, engineers and surveyors who are involved extensively on building construction, alteration and maintenance matters. Many of them are members of The Hong Kong Institute of Architects, The Hong Kong Institution of Engineers and The Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors.

5.3.1 The Hong Kong Institute of Architects (HKIA)

- (a) The Hong Kong Institute of Architects is a professional institution incorporated under the Hong Kong Institute of Architects Incorporation Ordinance in 1990 for the advancement of Architecture and to promote and facilitate the acquirement of knowledge of the various Arts and Sciences connected therewith. The Institute is committed to raising the standard of architecture in Hong Kong and the standard of professional service offered by its members.
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- (b) The following professional services can be offered by HKIA members:
- Architectural Design and Contract Administration;
 - Authorized Person Duty;
 - Alteration and Addition, Renovation and Refurbishment of Existing Buildings;
 - Building Safety Improvement;
 - Interior Design and Improvement Works; and
 - Project Management.
- (c) The HKIA has over 160 member firms that are able to provide full-fledged professional services. A list of HKIA member firms is available at the HKIA Secretariat on request.
- (d) The Institute is committed to offer free professional advice to the public via the Building Management Resource Centre (BMRC) of the Home Affairs Department.

5.3 Professional Bodies

5.3.2 The Hong Kong Institution of Engineers (HKIE)

- (a) The Hong Kong Institution of Engineers was incorporated on 5 December 1975 by Ordinance under Chapter 1105 in Hong Kong. The Institution is the body responsible for qualifying engineers in Hong Kong which is multi-disciplinary. As a learned society, the Institution encourages the exchange of technical information and ideas among members through organization of and participation in a wide range of activities, including technical meetings, visits, seminars and conferences. These activities are organized by sixteen Divisions, namely:



Biomedical	Electrical	Information Technology
Building	Electronics	Materials
Building Services	Environmental	Manufacturing & Industrial
Control, Automation & Instrumentation	Gas & Energy	Mechanical, Marine, Naval Architecture & Chemical
Civil	Geotechnical	Nuclear
	Structural	

- (b) Some of the above Divisions may provide professional services to the public relating to their properties. These Divisions include: Building Division, Building Services Division, Civil Division, Electrical Division, Environmental Division, Gas & Energy Division, Geotechnical Division and Structural Division.
- (c) All members of the Institution are bound by its Rules of Conduct, which governs how an engineer behaves towards the profession and the public.
- (d) The HKIE also through the Building Management Resource Centre (BMRC) to provide free professional advice to the public on issues related to maintenance of buildings in Hong Kong.

5.3 Professional Bodies

5.3.3 The Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors (HKIS)

(a) The Institute is a professional body incorporated by the Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors Ordinance in 1990. Members of HKIS include:



- **Building Surveyors** who are specialized in the building control, construction and maintenance of the fabric of buildings;
- **General Practice Surveyors** who are specialized in the valuation, sale, leasing and management of the finished products;
- **Land Surveyors** who are specialized in measurement of lands and setting out of boundaries for sites and buildings;
- **Planning and Development Surveyors** who are specialized in planning and development of land and properties; and
- **Quantity Surveyors** who are specialized in the building contractual arrangements and cost control.

(b) The Building Surveying Division of the HKIS is actively involved in the promotion of building safety and timely maintenance of buildings in Hong Kong. Expertise possessed by Professional Building Surveyors can be summarized in the following nine core areas of services:

- Project Planning and Design;
- Project Management and Monitoring;
- Project Supervision (as Technically Competent Persons required by Buildings Department to ensure construction safety);
- Project Revitalization (Alteration, Addition, Improvement, Refurbishment and Renovation);
- Building Maintenance and Management;
- Building Measurements, Surveys and Fire Insurance Valuations;
- Building Safety and Fire Safety Inspections and Works Supervision;
- Facility Management; and
- Disputes Resolution (Expert Witness and Arbitration).

(c) All HKIS members are bound by a comprehensive Rules of Conduct.

(d) HKIS also provides free consultation services via the Building Management Resources Centre (BMRC) of the Home Affairs Department.