

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

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(Question Serial No. 2162)

Head: (82) Buildings Department
Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified
Programme: (1) Buildings and Building Works
Controlling Officer: Director of Buildings (YU Tak-cheung)
Director of Bureau: Secretary for Development

Question:

It is mentioned in the Programme that the Department will “continue the one-off special scheme to inspect external drainage systems of all private residential and composite buildings except buildings of or not exceeding three storeys and to take appropriate enforcement action after inspection”. Will the Department inform this Committee of the following:

1. What are the numbers of buildings that have been inspected/are currently under inspection, their respective percentages in the target buildings, and the timetable for planned inspections, broken down by 18 districts?
2. Further to the above question, among those inspected buildings, what are the numbers and proportions of cases with defective drainage systems identified, such as leaked, broken or misconnected drains? What is the number of Drainage Repair Orders issued?
3. During inspection, will the Department provide one-stop assistance to the building owners concerned in application for relevant subsidy schemes for conducting maintenance and repair of their buildings?
4. What are the estimated expenditure, staff establishment and the amount of provision used so far for the above special scheme?

Asked by: Hon MAK Mei-kuen, Alice (LegCo internal reference no.: 85)

Reply:

1. Through the second round of the Anti-epidemic Fund (AEF), the Buildings Department (BD) has engaged consultancy firms to undertake this one-off special scheme to inspect the external drainage systems of all private residential or composite buildings exceeding three storeys in height (the inspection scheme). The funding for the inspection scheme

under the AEF is outside the scope of the Appropriation Bill or the estimates of the General Revenue Account. The inspection scheme is a 24-month special measure, covering the inspection of external drainage systems of around 20 000 buildings across the territory falling within the scope. It has been implemented since June 2020. The number of target buildings, target buildings inspected and their respective percentage by districts as of end February 2021 are tabulated below –

District	Number of target buildings (A)	Number of target buildings inspected (B)	Percentage (B/A)x100%
Central & Western	2 143	499	23
Eastern	1 402	270	19
Southern	1 199	110	9
Wan Chai	1 554	425	27
Kowloon City	2 535	581	23
Kwun Tong	464	106	23
Sham Shui Po	1 777	660	37
Yau Tsim Mong	2 402	932	39
Wong Tai Sin	343	292	85
Islands	414	13	3
Kwai Tsing	291	218	75
North	610	247	40
Sai Kung	549	5	<1
Sha Tin	870	103	12
Tai Po	1 348	113	8
Tsuen Wan	642	144	2
Tuen Mun	642	226	35
Yuen Long	971	74	8
Total	20 156	5 018	25

- BD is reviewing the consultants' inspection reports and will take appropriate follow up actions under the Buildings Ordinance (BO), such as issuing drainage repair orders requiring owners concerned to carry out the necessary repair works. Of the 1 800 reports reviewed so far, 130 buildings (or 7.2%) warrant issue of drainage repair orders and 227 buildings (or 12.6%) warrant issue of advisory letters. Some buildings may be served with both drainage repair orders and advisory letters. BD will follow-up the issue of statutory orders and advisory letters accordingly.

3. Owners should take primary responsibility for the proper maintenance of their properties. Nevertheless, the Government recognises that some owners may have genuine difficulties in fulfilling their responsibility in maintaining their properties due to lack of financial means, technical knowledge and/or organisation ability. Therefore, apart from taking enforcement action to ensure that building owners would discharge their statutory responsibilities, the Government has stepped up public education and publicity and also provided technical and financial assistance to owners of private buildings to maintain and repair their buildings, including building drainage systems through various assistance and loan schemes. Key assistance and loan schemes include the Operation Building Bright 2.0, the Building Maintenance Grant Scheme for Needy Owners, the Building Safety Loan Scheme, and Urban Renewal Authority's (URA) Home Renovation Interest-free Loan and the Common Area Repair Works Subsidy. In addition, the Government has earmarked \$1 billion to establish the Building Drainage System Repair Subsidy Scheme to subsidise owners of private residential or composite buildings aged 40 or above with lower average rateable values in repairing or upgrading the drains of their buildings.

To facilitate owners to apply the various assistance schemes above, URA has launched an all-in-one "Integrated Building Rehabilitation Assistance Scheme" (IBRAS). Under the IBRAS, owners can simply complete one set of application forms for multiple applications by those who meet the eligibility criteria of the respective assistance schemes. Also, during the one-off special inspection scheme mentioned above, BD's consultancy firms distribute pamphlets and posters to the owners, which contain information of IBRAS and the relevant assistance schemes. They have also set up hotlines under the inspection scheme to answer owners' enquiries including those on the assistance schemes. If owners encounter difficulties in complying with BD's enforcement actions on investigation and repair of their buildings, BD's in-house social services teams would outreach and take care of their financial, psychological and social needs, including assisting them in applying for the respective assistance schemes according to their eligibility.

4. A total of 38 BD staff, comprising professional, technical and clerical grade officers are required to implement the inspection scheme and take follow-up actions under the BO. \$300 million has been set aside for the inspection scheme. As at end of February 2021, the expenditure of the inspection scheme was around \$5 million.

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