

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

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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:

Some 20 000 unauthorised building works (UBWs) were removed in each of the past 5 years. Have all UBWs that posed higher potential risks been handled, or does it mean that the problem has gradually improved? Has the Buildings Department (BD) maintained information about the external UBWs in Hong Kong? If not, how does it determine the priority of enforcement actions against UBWs on a "risk-based" approach? Does BD rely solely on public reports?

Asked by: Hon TSE Wai-chuen, Tony

Reply:

The Buildings Department (BD) adopts a "risk-based" approach in determining the priority of enforcement actions against unauthorised building works (UBWs), by targeting those UBWs constituting obvious or imminent danger to life or property and newly built UBWs for priority enforcement action. BD has been identifying those UBWs warranting priority action by singling out those cases in the course of its handling public reports or referral from other government departments, as well as in the course of its proactive large scale operations (LSOs) under which target buildings are selected for inspections each year. These LSOs include (i) one for clearing actionable UBWs in common area and UBWs on rooftops, flat roofs, yards and lanes in 80 target domestic/composite buildings per annum; (ii) one for rectifying irregularities of building works associated with the sub-divided flats (SDFs) in 80 target domestic/composite buildings per annum; (iii) one for eradicating illegal domestic SDFs and premises in 20 target industrial buildings per annum; and (iv) one for removing unauthorised signboards on about ten target streets sections and 170 large unauthorised signboards per annum. As a result of these LSOs, BD has been taking enforcement action against irregularities warranting priority action in the target buildings in one go. The above approach of identifying UBWs warranting priority enforcement action does not involve any stocktaking of external UBWs across the territory.

Under the ten-year UBWs removal programme that ended in March 2011, UBWs including projecting structures, steel cages, large canopies, large glass panel external walls, large television screens, large signboards, UBWs contravening fire safety requirements and UBWs on canopies and cantilevered slab balconies were targeted for enforcement actions. BD also targeted to clear the unauthorised rooftop structures on single-staircase buildings which caused significant fire risks during that ten-year period. By the end of March 2011, nearly 12 000 buildings had been covered in the various enforcement programmes, with over 400 000 UBWs demolished and most of the high-risk UBWs had been removed.

To strengthen enforcement against UBWs, BD extended the coverage of UBWs warranting priority action to include all UBWs on roof-tops, podiums, yards and lanes of the buildings in April 2011. With this extension, BD is in effect taking priority enforcement actions against most, if not all, UBWs found on the façade and exterior of a building.

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