

**THE GOVERNMENT OF
THE HONG KONG
SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION**

EMERGENCY RESPONSE SYSTEM

*The policy, principles and operation of the
Government's emergency response system*

Emergency Support Unit
Security Bureau
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFD	Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department
AMS	Auxiliary Medical Service
ASC	Aviation Security Committee
BD	Buildings Department
CAD	Civil Aviation Department
CAS	Civil Aid Service
CCCs	Command and Control Centres
CESC	Chief Executive Security Committee
CIC	Combined Information Centre
DECC	District Emergency Co-ordination Centre
DH	Department of Health
EMB	Education and Manpower Bureau
EMSC	Emergency Monitoring and Support Centre
EPD	Environmental Protection Department
FCC	Food Control Committee
FEHD	Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
FSCC	Fire Services Communication Centre
FSD	Fire Services Department
GFS	Government Flying Service
GL	Government Laboratory
GLD	Government Logistics Department
HA	Hospital Authority
HAD	Home Affairs Department
HD	Housing Department
HKO	Hong Kong Observatory
HKPF	Hong Kong Police Force
IPC	Information Policy Committee
ISD	Information Services Department
JEPWCC	Joint Emergency Public Works Co-ordinating Committee
LCSD	Leisure and Cultural Services Department
LD	Lands Department
MD	Marine Department
MEC	Marine Emergency Centre
MRCC	Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre
ODC	Oil Distribution Committee
PHQCCC	Police Headquarters Command & Control Centre
Pol RHCs	Police Regional Higher Commands
RCCC	Regional Command and Control Centre
RSCC	Regional Security Control Committees
TD	Transport Department
SAR	Search and Rescue
SBDO	Security Bureau Duty Officer
SCC	Security Control Committee
SWD	Social Welfare Department

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 The Government is committed to providing an effective and efficient response to all emergency situations which threaten life, property and public security.

1.2 This document explains how we fulfil this responsibility. It is a comprehensive reference to -

- (a) the policy underpinning the Government's emergency response system;
- (b) the structure and operation of the system;
- (c) how the system is designed to handle the three main phases of any emergency response: rescue, recovery and restoration; and
- (d) the principal roles and responsibilities of Government departments and other concerned agencies.

1.3 This is an overview of the general emergency response system. Specific contingency plans stipulating the emergency response procedures, and roles and responsibilities of departments concerned under particular incidents are documented separately as per Annex 1.1.



Annex 1.1

Major Contingency Plans on Emergency Response
Currently in Force

Contingency Plan for Dealing with the Aircraft Crash in Hong Kong

Contingency Plan for the Salvage of Crashed Aircraft

Contingency Plan for Natural Disasters

Maritime and Aeronautical Search and Rescue - Policy Instructions

Daya Bay Contingency Plan

Classified Plans / Instructions

Contingency Plan for Public Safety during Visits by Nuclear Powered Warships (PORTSAFE)

Response to Terrorism

Response to Internal Security Situations (RISS)

Response to Chemical, Biological, Radiological & Nuclear Agent Attack (CBRN)

CHAPTER 2

How We Define an Emergency

2.1 In its most basic form, an emergency is -

any event, natural or man-made, that demands a rapid response in order to protect life, property and public security.

2.2. An extreme emergency, or disaster, is -

a serious disruption of life, probably arising with little or no warning, that causes or threatens death or injury on a scale exceeding the normal responses required of the public emergency services.



CHAPTER 3

Government's Policy on Emergency Response

3.1 Our policy on emergency response is simple and may be summarised in one simple mission statement. This statement began Chapter 1, but it is important enough to repeat here -

“The Government is committed to providing an effective and efficient response to all emergency situations which threaten life, property and public security.”

3.2 Chapter 2 illustrated the extremes of what emergencies may be. An emergency may be as limited and isolated as rescuing one person from a single car crash and getting him to hospital for treatment as quickly as possible. It may be more widespread, but of a relatively low risk to life, such as the need to rescue people from rainy season floods and then rehouse them. It may have a limited geographical effect, but severe consequences for a local community, such as that happens when landslips affect residential areas. Finally, it may have severe and widespread consequences, such as the effects of a typhoon passing directly over Hong Kong.

3.3 In any emergency, the Government must ensure that it has the capability to respond to the scale and extent of the situation in the most efficient and effective manner. This means that we must have not only the capability to respond to large-scale emergencies, but that we also have the skills and experience to judge the most appropriate level of response to any emergency, no matter big or small.

3.4 We have, over the years, developed a bottom-up approach in responding to emergencies. Our policy is to keep the emergency response as simple as possible by-

- (a) limiting the number of involved departments and agencies;
- (b) limiting the levels of communication within the emergency response system; and
- (c) delegating necessary authority and responsibility to those at the scene of an emergency.

3.5 The vast majority of emergencies can be handled by the emergency services, principally the Police and the Fire Services, using their own expertise and resources. In certain circumstances, other agencies will be involved. For example, the Government Flying Service and the Civil Aid Service will respond to a mountain rescue emergency. The emergency services are trained and resourced to work independently of any overall central Government command structure, so they are able to ensure the most direct and quickest possible effective response to most emergencies.

3.6 It is very rare for us to find that we must activate the central Government emergency response system in order to provide comprehensive support to the emergency services in extreme emergency situations which have the potential to become major disasters.

3.7 In 1996, we developed and instituted a “Three Tier” emergency response system to ensure that we can always provide an appropriate response. This Three Tier System is described in more detail in Chapter 4.



CHAPTER 4

The Three Tier System

4.1 As we have explained, it is essential to keep emergency command and communication systems as simple as possible, in order to provide an effective and efficient response to emergencies. Our system is designed to work with the minimum number of layers of command and control; for emergency duties to be directed by the emergency services as near to the scene of incident as possible; and for the emergency services to retain directly the responsibility and the authority necessary to respond to emergency situations within their departmental capabilities. Although more complex emergency situations will require support from other departments and agencies, especially during the relief and recovery phase, it will normally be the emergency services, with the supporting agencies, which will respond to all aspects of an emergency situation. Only in extreme situations is there likely to be a need for the central Government, through the Emergency Monitoring and Support Centre (EMSC), to become directly involved.

(A) Tier One Response (Emergency services)

4.2 The Tier 1 Response involves the emergency services operating entirely under the direction, monitoring and support of their own commands.

4.3 **Command and Control Centres (CCCs):** Emergency services departments, such as the Hong Kong Police Force and the Fire Services Department, have permanently manned command and control facilities which are able to receive, and respond to, calls for emergency assistance at any time. The usual means for the public to request emergency assistance, through 999 calls, will be received initially by these centres, which then assess the requirements of the situation and initiate the appropriate response.

4.4 **Police Headquarters Command and Control Centre (PHQCCC) and Police Regional Higher Commands (Pol RHCs):** The PHQCCC is the primary command centre for the Police. In an extreme emergency situation it will be responsible for the overall command of all Hong Kong's security services, based on policy decisions by the Chief Executive Security Committee (CESC) and the Security Control Committee (SCC) (see paras 4.9 and 4.10). It will thus provide a link between the policy making bodies of the Government and the security services. It will also co-ordinate the efforts of the four Pol RHCs and the allocation of security

services' personnel and resources. Pol RHCs are the higher command facilities of the Police Regional Command and Control Centres through which Regional Security Service Commanders issue orders, within the framework of policy and directives received from the PHQCCC. The PHQCCC monitors incidents as they occur in the territory and keeps senior officers and the Security Bureau Duty Officer (SBDO) informed of major incidents as they develop (see para. 4.6).

4.5 Fire Services Communication Centre (FSCC): The FSCC is the centralised Command and Control Centre for the Fire Services Department. It is responsible for receiving emergency calls and despatching Fire Services resources to respond to incidents. Incident information is channelled through the 999 system to the FSCC, and requests for assistance will be dealt with immediately. The FSCC monitors the development of incidents and disseminates incident messages (i) internally to Fire Services officers/units concerned, and (ii) externally to other Government departments and organisations, including the SBDO as required, in accordance with contingency plans and departmental instructions.

(B) Tier Two Response (SBDO and ESU)

4.6 There are standing instructions in the Police and Fire Services Department for alerting the Security Bureau Duty Officer (SBDO) about incidents which may need Government Secretariat attention. At this stage, the Tier 2 Response will be activated. At this level, the Government Secretariat will closely monitor the unfolding of incidents through the Emergency Support Unit (ESU), a unit established within the Security Bureau in 1996, which co-ordinates the activities of the SBDOs. Incidents coming under this category are those where the scale of the incident is likely to grow in terms of threats to life, property and security, and which may require a more complex emergency response operation. They are also likely to grow into situations which will generate significant media and community interest.

(C) Tier Three Response (EMSC)

4.7 In the event of a major incident involving widespread threats to life, property and security and where extensive Government emergency response operations are required, the Tier 3 Response will be activated. The Emergency Monitoring and Support Centre (EMSC) will be activated upon the direction of the Secretary for Security or a designated senior Security Bureau official. Other security committees (e.g. the Chief Executive Security Committee and the Security Control Committee) may be convened as necessary (see paras 4.9 and 4.10 below). A flow chart describing the Government's graduated response to emergencies is provided at Annex 4.1.

4.8 **Emergency Monitoring and Support Centre (EMSC):** The EMSC is located in the basement of the Central Government Offices, Main Wing, Lower Albert Road. It is the Government Secretariat's main monitoring and support centre during a widespread or major emergency that may seriously affect life, property and security in Hong Kong. The EMSC itself is not an operational co-ordination or command centre. In discharging its monitoring role, it will work closely with other co-ordination centres such as the PHQCCC and the FSCC on issues which require Government-wide attention; with the Information Services Department on matters that have public relations and media implications; and with the Home Affairs Department on the co-ordination of emergency relief efforts, with particular regard to facilitating victims' access to comprehensive assistance by different Government departments.

4.9 **Chief Executive Security Committee (CESC):** The CESC comprises the Chief Executive and his senior advisors from Government Secretariat and the Police. In the event of an extreme, prolonged and widespread emergency which seriously affects, or has the potential to seriously affect, the security of Hong Kong, the CESC will be convened to direct government security policy.

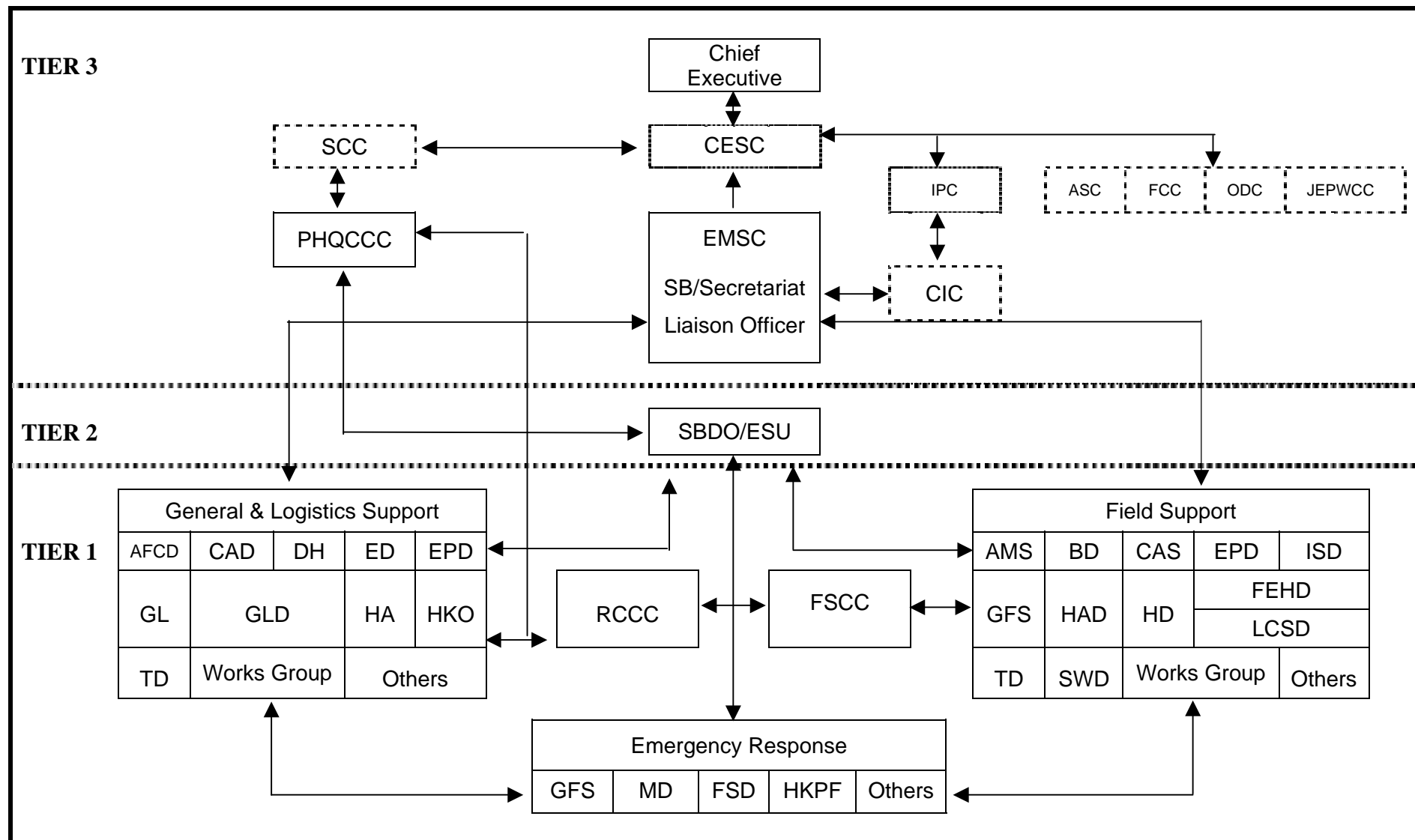
4.10 **The Security Control Committee (SCC) and the Regional Security Control Committees (RSCCs):** The CESC is advised and supported by the SCC, which is a committee comprising representatives of the Security Bureau and the Police. The SCC will advise the CESC on matters relating to the implementation of policy, and will act as a link between the RSCCs and the CESC. The RSCCs, established at the regional level, are responsible to the SCC for the local planning, co-ordination, control and implementation of internal security and other emergency measures within their respective Regions. The RSCCs are composed of Regional Police Commanders and representatives of the Home Affairs Department; other members may be co-opted as required.

4.11 **Civil Government Emergency Committees:** There are also a number of other emergency control committees to co-ordinate Government-wide planning and implementation of the security policy formulated by the CESC. Such committees will advise the CESC on matters relating to the implementation of security policy within their particular spheres of expertise and experience. They will act as a link between the departments, the public utilities and the CESC. These committees include the Information Policy Committee (IPC), the Aviation Security Committee (ASC), the Food Control Committee (FCC), the Oil Distribution Committee (ODC) and the Joint Emergency Public Works Co-ordinating Committee (JEPWCC). Other ad-hoc committees may be formed, on the direction of the CESC or the Chief Secretary for Administration, to deal with any major problems.

4.12 **Combined Information Centre (CIC):** The CIC, which is run by the Information Services Department, acts as the central coordinator for the Government's information dissemination and media response efforts during a disaster. It works in close cooperation with the EMSC and with departmental Information Officers.



Flow Chart on Graduated Response to Emergencies



Annex 4.2**Civil Government Committees**

<u>Committee</u>	<u>Chairman</u>
Aviation Security Committee (ASC)	Deputy Secretary for Security
Food Control Committee (FCC)	Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation
Information Policy Committee (IPC)	Director of Information Services
Joint Emergency Public Works Co-ordinating Committee (JEPCC)	Permanent Secretary for the Environment, Transport and Works (Works)
Oil Distribution Committee (ODC)	Director-General of Industry
Regional Security Control Committees (RSCC's)	Regional Police Commanders
Security Control Committee (SCC)	Deputy Commissioner of Police

CHAPTER 5

The Rescue Phase

5.1 The Three Tier System will continue to operate, in one form or another, through the three principal phases of emergency response. These are the rescue, recovery and restoration phases. However, the roles and responsibilities of involved departments and agencies vary, depending not only on the nature of the emergency but also on the stage of the emergency response. In this chapter, we take a more detailed look at the rescue phase. The purpose of this phase is the rescue of life and property, and the containment of the situation/incident to prevent any further deterioration. The recovery and restoration phases are discussed in Chapters 6 and 7.

5.2 For the purposes of these three chapters, we are assuming that we are dealing with a major disaster which requires a full Three Tier response, so that we can explain the full range of departmental functions. In the case of less extreme situations, the departments may handle the situation as a Tier One response and the central Government's involvement will not be necessary.

On-site Command and Control

5.3 The principal responsibility for on-site rescue rests with the FSD. During the rescue phase of a Search and Rescue operation, however, the Marine Department will coordinate the efforts of the deployed rescue units. The Police will carry out a support role in the rescue phase.

5.4 In the event of an extreme emergency or a major disaster, we must exercise strict control over public access to the site, in order to ensure that the emergency services are free to concentrate on saving life and property, as well as protecting the site for any necessary subsequent expert investigations.

5.5 A disaster site on land or at sea in Hong Kong will normally consist of two zones, namely the inner cordoned zone and the outer cordoned zone, both of which will be established by the Police. The Police will consult the Fire Services Department as necessary on the establishment of the inner cordoned zone in disaster type emergencies.

Role of the Civil Aviation Department

5.6 The Civil Aviation Department (CAD) is responsible, through the Aeronautical Rescue Coordination Centre, for the coordination of Search and Rescue (SAR) operations for aircraft in distress within the airspace under Hong Kong's jurisdiction. In case of a civilian aircraft crashing in Hong Kong, the Director of Civil Aviation will be responsible for the preservation of aircraft wreckage and the subsequent investigation into the accident. He will seek assistance from various rescue units such as the Hong Kong Police Force, etc. to preserve the evidence for the investigation.

Role of the Fire Services Department

5.7 The Senior Fire Officer attending a disaster site on land, or within Hong Kong waters, will be the Rescue Commander who will direct all rescue activities and coordinate all rescue parties involved within the inner cordoned zone. The Rescue Commander will establish a Fire Services Incident Command Post, which will fly a distinctive pennant of yellow and green stripes, and will normally operate from a Mobile Command Unit. It will be co-located with the Police Command Post and will be provided with a Police liaison officer. He will inform the FSCC immediately once the post has been set up, giving its location. The FSCC will then keep the EMSC informed of significant developments at the scene. Representatives of other emergency services wishing to enter the inner cordoned zone of the disaster site will require Fire Services Department's permission. If necessary, the Department will issue safety equipment to essential personnel working within the inner cordoned zone. The Rescue Commander will provide advice and assistance to the District Officer (DO) in dealing with enquiries from the media and the public. In consultation as necessary with the DO, he will also respond directly to the media.

Role of the Hong Kong Police Force

5.8 The Police will establish a Police Command Post at the scene which will be co-located with the Fire Services Incident Command Post and will be provided with a FSD liaison officer. All Police action at the scene shall be directed from the Command Post. The EMSC will be notified via the PHQCCC of the establishment and location of the Command Post. The Senior Police Officer attending a disaster site will be designated as the Police Field Commander. Each agency will command its own staff in the discharge of its duties, but the Police, in liaison with the Rescue Commander and the relevant DO, will be the overall coordinator of the activities of all agencies at the scene. The Police will also secure the outer cordoned zone surrounding the disaster site, and representatives of other departments wishing to enter it will require Police permission. Police Officers working within the cordoned areas will be in uniform or wear conspicuity vests and other personnel may be issued with conspicuity vests or armbands.

Role of the Home Affairs Department

5.9 The relevant District Officer will set up his own District Emergency Co-ordination Centre (DECC). The DO is responsible for co-ordinating relief measures by the Social Welfare Department, the Housing Department and other agencies at the scene. He will coordinate the Government's efforts to help victims of emergencies to liaise with Government departments. The Police Field Commander, the Fire Services Rescue Commander and the District Officer will have to liaise closely to deal with enquiries from the media and the public on site. The Home Affairs Department will assist the DO in his role of "Disaster Relief Coordinator." If the emergency is widespread, this coordinating role may be directed at the headquarters level. If circumstances warrant, the DO will set up a Help Desk at the scene and/or at other appropriate venues, which shall be clearly identified with a banner or other notices. The Help Desk will serve to co-ordinate relief measures and answer related enquiries.

Role of the Information Services Department

5.10 Information Services Department (ISD) Officers will oversee press activities and arrange for on-site briefings to be given to the media by the DO or the on-scene commanders. They will also be responsible for advising the Government on any public relations activities that may need to be taken immediately (e.g. on-site visits by senior officers). This procedure will keep the public informed of the progress of the Government's response to the disaster, and will deter the press from hampering rescue work. Information Officers should also advise the officials concerned (normally a DO, Police or FSD spokesman) on the most effective way to present the facts to the media, when giving press interviews on site. In addition, the on-site ISD officers will act as the point of contact for the ISD Combined Information Centre (CIC), which has the overall response for coordinating the provision of information to the media and the public.

Role of the Marine Department

5.11 The MD is responsible, through the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre / Marine Emergency Centre (MRCC / MEC), for the conduct of maritime Search and Rescue (SAR) operations in Hong Kong waters and within the Hong Kong Maritime SAR Region. During the rescue phase of a SAR operation, the MD will coordinate the efforts of the deployed rescue units.

Role of the Hospital Authority

5.12 The Hospital Authority (HA) is responsible for the provision of hospital services for casualties. If the demand for emergency hospital services exceeds the normal capacity of a single receiving hospital, the HA disaster contingency plan will be activated. If the situation warrants, the HA will despatch a medical control officer and medical teams for on-the-spot triage and emergency treatment.

Off-site Command and Control

5.13 The principal off-site command and control centres are those Police and Fire Services facilities described in 4.3 - 4.5. These may operate upon the direction of the CESC and the SCC, as described in 4.9 and 4.10.

Off-site Monitoring, Support and Coordination

5.14 All departments involved in emergency response will provide monitoring, support and coordination in their own areas of responsibility by operating an off-site emergency coordination centre at an appropriate level. The ESU and the EMSC provide the overall monitoring capability necessary to give senior Government officials an understanding of the big picture.

5.15 The EMSC is activated in emergency situations where the scale of response is, or is likely to be, in excess of that which can be dealt with by the emergency services under their normal operating conditions. These will also be situations where the SBDO, on his own or in conjunction with the ESU, will not be able to monitor and report on the development of an emergency or potential emergency situation, and where additional assistance will be necessary. Such situations will include -

- a) a serious, prolonged or particularly complex emergency situation affecting public order or public safety;
- b) an aircraft crash incident, an incident affecting a hazardous installation or a major maritime, aeronautical or land search and rescue operation;
- c) the activation of the Daya Bay Contingency Plan;
- d) depending on the intensity of the prevailing circumstances, when a tropical cyclone warning signal, a rainstorm warning or a landslide warning is in force, or during other natural disasters;
- e) an internal security emergency;
- f) a prolonged terrorist incident; and
- g) any other emergency, as directed by the Secretary for Security.

5.16 The EMSC will update senior Government officers, emergency centres and others involved on the development of the situation, the progress of the Government's relief and recovery operations and community reaction.

Interdepartmental Coordination and Liaison

5.17 We know that it is extremely important to maintain direct communication at all levels of the emergency response system. In 5.3 - 5.12, we explained how this communication is achieved on site. We operate a departmental liaison officer system to ensure a similar level of communication between the EMSC and the key departments.

5.18 The ESU plays a proactive role to ensure proper liaison between departments at appropriate levels in situations which develop rapidly, before the EMSC becomes operational, or in situations which do not require EMSC to be activated but where central Government monitoring and support can assist the emergency response.

5.19 When the EMSC is activated, we already have a clear understanding of the nature of the emergency we are responding to. Liaison officers from key involved bureaux and departments will be called into the EMSC on a need basis. These will normally include the Police, the FSD and the ISD, but may include the Environment, Transport and Works Bureau, the HAD, the Transport Department and others. These officers will have detailed knowledge of their areas of responsibility, so that they can act as expert advisers to the EMSC on specific issues within their areas of knowledge. They will also be able to identify what departmental information will be useful for the EMSC's work, as well as to identify what information being handled by the EMSC will be useful for their own departments.

5.20 Experience has shown that, if these liaison officers are proactive in finding out what is going on and what information will be useful in various places, they function as an extremely useful channel of communication. They therefore play an important role in maintaining a high degree of coordination between central Government and the emergency response agencies.

CHAPTER 6

The Recovery Phase

6.1 As soon as a disaster happens and often long after the event itself has ended, work must go on to assist victims of the disaster. The purpose of the recovery phase is to return the community to a condition considered acceptable by that community. The arrangements are intended to satisfy the physical, psychological and social needs of the community. Essentially, recovery management will concentrate on the following major areas -

- a) accommodation, food, clothing and relief funds;
- b) enquiries from the public; and
- c) registration and information services for disaster victims.

6.2 One of the main EMSC functions, when it is active, is to ensure that the recovery phase has been properly initiated and that the on-site recovery agencies have the necessary resources and support.

Accommodation, Food, Clothing and Relief Funds

6.3 The HAD will be responsible for coordinating relief measures and ensuring that those affected are cared for properly. The relevant DO will establish a help desk or post and maintain close liaison with all departments engaged in rescue and relief work. The DO will arrange for temporary shelters to be opened to accommodate the homeless. In addition to the assistance provided directly by the DO and the HAD, they will also coordinate the Government's efforts to help victims of disasters to liaise with the Government departments.

6.4. The Director of Social Welfare will be responsible for providing essential relief items to the victims as far as his resources permit. These will include food, water and blankets for any persons made temporarily homeless, and assistance from emergency relief funds to cover personal injuries and deaths. SWD will work closely with the HAD.

Enquiries from the Public

6.5 The DO will assist the Police in dealing with enquiries at the scene from members of the public.

6.6 The ISD will be responsible for disseminating information on the situation to the public through the media and to Government departments. The ISD will send liaison officers to the Fire Services and Police Command Posts. All Government departments concerned must cooperate in providing the ISD with timely and necessary information on site.

6.7 The ISD Liaison Officers will deal with the press at the scene and arrange such facilities for them as may be agreed with the DO, the Fire Services and Police Commanders and, where appropriate, other departmental representatives at the scene.

6.8 The ISD will use the CIC to arrange for special announcements over radio and TV concerning recall of Government personnel, emergency, traffic and other measures, the telephone numbers of any Casualty Enquiry Unit (CEU) that has been set up and official statements on the disaster and the progress of rescue operations.

Registration and Information Services for Disaster Victims

6.9 Both the SWD and the Housing Department are responsible for registering disaster victims. Whenever possible, these two departments will work side by side to speed up the process of registration and answer the victims' enquiries.

6.10 The Police will assume overall responsibility for the disaster site, subject to the HAD's role as the Government spokesman and relief coordinator, and also subject to the discharge of any duties or responsibilities vested in any Government department or agency by law or agreement. They will then take follow up action including the collection of human bodies and remains, the identification of fatalities and the recovery and safe custody of unattended property. There will normally be an investigative commitment concerning death, injury or damage to property. This responsibility calls for the preservation of evidence and the location of witnesses.

6.11 If necessary, the Police will establish a CEU at the PHQCCC, or where appropriate a unit with similar functions at local level.

6.12 An integral part of these services is the setting up of hot-lines so that victims, relatives and friends and other concerned parties can obtain assistance and information quickly and effectively. These hot-lines may be established by the Police, the HAD, the SWD and other agencies to provide information on how to e.g., obtain disaster relief, report and locate missing persons, and provide other essential information to those affected.

CHAPTER 7

The Restoration Phase

7.1 Although the restoration of a site after an emergency or a disaster is not strictly an emergency response, the restoration process often begins while the rescue and recovery phases are ongoing. In addition, it is often in the best interests of all concerned to ensure that the restoration phase is completed as quickly as is practicable.

7.2 The departments involved in the restoration phase may have a heavy public works emphasis, and may also include agencies such as the Housing Department, the Home Affairs Department, the Social Welfare Department, the Hospital Authority and the Department of Health. The purpose of the restoration phase is the coordinated process of supporting disaster affecting communities in the reconstruction of the physical infrastructure and restoration of emotional, social, economic and physical well-being.

7.3 It is not our intention in this document to go into details about disaster recovery management, which has its own demands and characteristics. We must, however, note that recovery agencies must become involved at an early stage of any major rescue and recovery effort so that they may also begin planning an effective recovery process. The recovery phase may be a long and costly process. An early involvement by the recovery agencies will allow the needs of those affected to be quickly identified in order to minimise the long-term distress caused by the disaster. It may also help to reduce costs and timeframes significantly.



CHAPTER 8

Information Dissemination

8.1 Other than the actual rescue and relief work during an emergency, the most important task that needs to be done is to provide accurate and timely information to the public. This information will be in one of two forms. It will be either -

- (a) what the public needs to know about emergency preparations, such as storm warning signals, traffic and transport advisories, emergency contact numbers and emergency arrangements; or
- (b) information on the development of actual emergency situations. In other words, real news.

8.2 We must ensure that the Government works quickly and efficiently to give what the public needs to know as soon as possible. We must also accept that the media will often be able to respond to news stories more quickly than the Government, with its perhaps more complex information gathering, verification and dissemination systems. Nevertheless, for both forms of information, we have a Government-wide responsibility to keep the public as up-to-date as possible.

8.3 The type of information demanded by the media and the public is very often not the same, or in the same form, as the information needed within the emergency response system. In order to allow the emergency response system to function to its potential as well as to provide information to the public as quickly as possible, there is a need for a separate but complementary public information dissemination channel during emergencies.

8.4 This separate channel operates through the ISD. We have described how ISD liaison officers will coordinate on-site assistance to the media, and how the CIC will handle both the response to general media inquiries and the dissemination of other information to the media.

8.5 It is essential that all departments and emergency response personnel understand the importance of assisting the ISD in its information dissemination role. Although this assistance should not be allowed to interfere with emergency rescue and relief operations, departments must factor the need to provide assistance into the way that they respond, as a department, to emergencies.

8.6 A major incident will attract intense community and media interest. The ESU and the EMSC will liaise closely with the ISD to keep the public informed, through the media, of major incidents, the Government's response, and the progress of relief and recovery operations. The ISD will co-ordinate the release of information to the public in accordance with its departmental standing instructions, which should be familiar to all departmental officers who may be involved in providing assistance to ISD officers. The ESU and the EMSC will not play a direct role in the information dissemination task unless specifically directed to do so. The ESU and the EMSC will assist to ensure that the ISD is updated on the latest situation of incidents and departmental response; the ISD will disseminate the necessary information to the public in a timely and effective manner.

8.7 Similarly, the ESU and the EMSC will liaise closely with the Director of Home Affairs in monitoring community reaction, so that the Government Secretariat and departments concerned are advised accordingly and also to ensure that appropriate and effective response action is taken.



CHAPTER 9

Roles and Responsibilities of Departments and Agencies

9.1 We have, in Chapters 4 - 7, described the broad operation of our emergency response system. In so doing, we have limited our detailed description of responsibilities to only a few Government departments for the sake of simplicity. In reality, the number of departments and agencies involved may be very large.

9.2 Annex 9.1 provides a comprehensive description of the main tasks of Government departments that have prescribed roles during emergencies. Annex 9.2 lists the main non-Government agencies that may need to coordinate their emergency response efforts with the Government.



Annex 9.1**Roles and Responsibilities of Departments and Agencies****Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department**

1. The Director of Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation will be responsible for assessing the extent of loss or damage to agriculture and fishery undertakings, and for taking necessary relief measures. The Department also provides emergency crews to assist with the removal of trees which may have blocked roads or become dangerous within their areas of responsibility during a disaster.

Architectural Services Department

2. The Director of Architectural Services will be responsible for advising on the stability of damaged government buildings and facilities, and ex-government hospitals, and for carrying out the necessary emergency repairs. On request, the Director of Architectural Services is able to provide the same service for subvented hospitals and subvented schools.

Auxiliary Medical Service

3. The Chief Staff Officer, AMS, will be responsible for providing volunteers to give medical assistance to augment the services of the Department of Health, HA and FSD's ambulance services.

Buildings Department

4. The Director of Buildings will be responsible for the setting-up and operation of an emergency organisation to deal with reports concerning damaged buildings, building works, landslips and slopes which threaten private buildings.

Civil Aid Service

5. The Chief Staff Officer, CAS, will be responsible for deploying trained and disciplined volunteers to assist in operations such as search and rescue, crowd control, registration of victims, casualty handling, evacuation and feeding of disaster victims.

Civil Aviation Department

6. The Director of Civil Aviation is the Search Director in SAR operations for aircraft in distress. In case of an aircraft crash involving a civil aircraft he is responsible for the preservation of wreckage, so that the accident can be investigated under the

Hong Kong Civil Aviation (Investigation of Accidents) Regulations. In case of a disaster, he may restrict air traffic or close the airport as required.

Civil Engineering and Development Department

7. The Head of Geotechnical Engineering Office (GEO), CEDD will be responsible for advising Government departments on potential dangers due to landslips and on measures to deal with landslips, for organising clearance work involving rocks, dangerous boulders, other occurrences where the use of explosives is required, and for answering requests for assistance in the saving of life, protection of property, and miscellaneous calls for action or assistance within the resources of his Department. The Head of the Civil Engineering Office (CEO), CEDD will be responsible for advising on the stability of damaged marine facilities and for organising necessary emergency repairs.

Drainage Services Department

8. The Director of Drainage Services is responsible for clearing and repairing blocked or damaged public sewers and storm-drains, including engineered sections of open channels, and major stream courses, and for ensuring the satisfactory operation of sewage treatment and flood prevention works.

Education and Manpower Bureau

9. The Secretary for Education and Manpower Bureau will decide whether, and if so, at what time, schools and kindergartens will be closed. In making a decision on school closure, the Director of Education will base on a set of pre-determined criteria and the supply of quality information from relevant sources.

Electrical and Mechanical Services Department

10. In close liaison with the utilities companies, the Director of Electrical and Mechanical Services will be responsible for ensuring that, if electricity and piped gas supplies are interrupted during an emergency, these companies will, as quickly as practicable, carry out repair works to resume supplies. Upon request, the Department will also provide special equipment to assist other Government Departments with search and rescue operations.

Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

11. The Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene will be responsible for providing staff to carry out the following duties, when required, during an emergency –

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- a) removal of animal carcasses;
 - b) clearance of refuses from open/surface drains and choked gullies;
 - c) supply of temporary toilets and dustbins, collection of refuse and maintenance of hygiene in temporary and relief centres;
 - d) under the direction of Police, the recovery and removal of dead bodies, and assistance to the Director of Health to arrange for temporary extra mortuary facilities when required; and
 - e) clearance from roadsides in the urban area, where access is not restricted by drop gates, of dangerous or fallen trees after cutting by LCSD (LCSD is responsible for both cutting and clearing of trees in the New Territories).

Fire Services Department

12. The Director of Fire Services will be responsible for coordinating all rescue parties involved in extinguishing fires, protecting life and property in case of fire or other calamity, and emergency rescue work, which includes rendering assistance to people who appear to be in need of immediate medical attention.

Government Flying Service

13. The Controller, GFS, will be responsible for providing whatever flying services may be required for life-saving, fire-fighting, flying of relief supplies, aerial photography, surveillance, casualty evacuation and reconnaissance. Requests for helicopter support should generally be made to GFS by the Police Duty Officer of PHQCCC, in case of fire-fighting be directed from officers of FSCC, in case of Maritime Search and Rescue be directed from officers of MRCC of Marine Department and in case of aircraft-related accidents be directed by officers of Civil Aviation Department.

Government Logistics Department

14. The Director of Government Logistics is responsible for the provision of emergency transport support. A control centre will be set up in his Hong Kong Transport Pool to co-ordinate the deployment of pool vehicles.

15. The Director of Government Logistics is also responsible for supplying emergency items (e.g. blankets, sandbags, disinfectant) from its central warehouse at the Government Logistics Centre, and for arranging the urgent purchase of non-standard items. The Department will secure emergency vehicles from GLTA to deliver these items to user departments if departmental transport is unavailable.

Department of Health

16. The Director of Health will receive casualties with minor injuries in Accident & Emergency Units and Clinics, if a major disaster overloads the capabilities of the Accident & Emergency Departments of the Hospital Authority. The Director of Health will also provide a physicist at a disaster site, if radioactive substances are involved. If required, the Director of Health, with assistance from Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene, will arrange for temporary extra mortuary facilities, and for the carrying out of autopsies.

Highways Department

17. The Director of Highways will be responsible for clearing and repairing blocked or damaged public roads, removing dangerous and fallen boulders and dealing with landslips on Government land which has not been allocated to any department for maintenance, answering requests for assistance in the saving of life, protection of property and miscellaneous calls for action or assistance within the resources of his Department, and for coordinating repairs to utilities during emergencies. The Department is also responsible for keeping TD informed of the progress of road repair and clearing work at regular intervals, to enable TD to coordinate and develop transport arrangements as necessary.

Home Affairs Department

18. The Director of Home Affairs will be the “Disaster Relief Coordinator”, working through the headquarters emergency control centre and the District Officers. The District Officers will coordinate disaster relief efforts at the local level, in cooperation with Social Welfare Department, Housing Department and others as necessary, and will act as the local spokesman for central Government. DOs of the HAD will be responsible for coordinating emergency relief work in their districts and for reporting to their headquarters on the local situation, they will also be responsible for setting up help desks at the scene, or at other suitable locations. Each District Office will set up a DECC with 24-hour manning. The Public Enquiry Service Section of HAD Headquarters will be manned 24 hours a day to answer public enquiries of a non-technical nature. When required, staff of HAD HQ will open an ECC which will act as a channel of communication with the ECCs in District Offices, provide overall emergency relief coordination as necessary and provide a link with the EMSC. HAD shall arrange for community centres / halls to be available to evacuees and other displaced persons when and where necessary. They will coordinate Government’s efforts to help victims of disasters to liaise with Government Departments for help.

Hong Kong Observatory

19. The Director of the Hong Kong Observatory will be responsible for issuing all weather-related warnings and general precautionary announcements to the public and for providing meteorological advice to other departments/agencies.

Hong Kong Police Force

20. The Commissioner of Police is responsible for the co-ordination of all agencies at the scene of a disaster, except rescue agencies which will be coordinated by the Director of Fire Services, until such time as the site is handed over to its lawful owners or other appropriate authority. Specific responsibilities include -

- a) the preservation and security of the disaster site;
- b) the control of traffic to and from the scene with particular attention to facilitating unimpeded movement of emergency vehicles and casualty evacuation;
- c) the collection, collation and dissemination of casualty data by activation of the Casualty Enquiry Unit at PHQCCC, the Disaster Victim Identification Unit and the Casualty Documentation Teams;
- d) conducting an investigation into the cause of the disaster where there is evidence of a criminal offence or where the cause is unknown; an investigation may also be conducted on the direction of the Coroner;
- e) the activation of PHQCCC to co-ordinate the overall Police response to the disaster and to facilitate liaison with all other Government Departments involved in the disaster response including EMSC, FSD, HA, HAD, GS and TD; and
- f) the dissemination of information on all police related matters pertaining to the disaster, through the Police Public Relations Branch.

Hospital Authority

21. The Chief Executive of the Hospital Authority (HA) will be responsible for providing emergency medical services during an emergency. If the situation warrants, and on the request of FSD, the HA will send a Medical Control Officer and Medical Team(s) to provide on-site triage of casualties, and emergency medical treatment. The HA will also provide medical advice on the casualty evacuation plan.

Housing Department

22. The Director of Housing, in conjunction with the relevant District Officer(s) of HAD and the Director of Social Welfare, will be responsible for providing emergency accommodation for victims made homeless.

Information Services Department

23. The ISD will be responsible for coordinating Government's information dissemination to the media. It will promptly issue advisory warnings, special announcements, regular situation reports and related information to the public through the media. It should also pass on such information to Government Departments including SBDO / EMSC and PHQCCC. ISD will liaise, through its Combined Information Centre, with departments having key front-line roles in a disaster. ISD liaison officers will advise the DO who is the spokesman for central Government at the local level, on media briefings at the scene of a disaster. They will also advise departments and central Government on public relations activities that may need to be taken to improve the corporate image of Government in its handling of disasters.

Lands Department

24. District Lands Officers of the New Territories will be responsible to the DECCs of HAD NT District Offices for locating areas affected by a disaster, and for making first-hand ground situation reports to the DECCs at the District Offices. They will assist in providing land status reports on the disaster area to relevant Government Departments having a duty to take follow-up action in the aftermath of the disaster. The Director of Lands (Survey and Mapping Office) is responsible for supplying mapping data and supplying aerial photography in conjunction with GFS of the disaster area. He will also provide topographical surveys after the disaster.

Leisure and Cultural Services Department

25. The Director of Leisure and Cultural Services will be responsible for providing staff, when required during an emergency, for cutting dangerous or fallen trees within the urban areas. In the New Territories, the Director will also be responsible for the cutting and clearance of dangerous or fallen trees affecting public roads not within recreation sites maintained by the AFCD.

Marine Department

26. The Director of Marine is the designated Search Director for SAR operations involving vessels in distress in Hong Kong waters and within the Hong Kong Maritime SAR Region. He is responsible for control and, if necessary, closure of the port, if required during a disaster.

Office of the Telecommunications Authority

27. The Director-General of Telecommunications will be responsible for promptly relaying the possible Telecommunication Network Congestion Warning to the telecommunication network operators upon receipt of notification of a disaster or major emergency, and will monitor any disruption to any of their services and effect quick repair.

Security Bureau

28. Security Bureau (SB) co-ordinates the planning of Government's overall response to major emergencies through the ESU and EMSC system. SB provides the link and first point of contact between the rest of Chief Executive's Office (CEO) and the Chief Secretary for Administration (CS). SB is responsible for keeping CEO and the CS informed about the development of events, Government's overall response and the community's reaction to the events. The Emergency Support Unit of SB maintains the EMSC, manages the SBDO system and manages central Government contingency plans and resources.

Social Welfare Department

29. The Director of Social Welfare, in conjunction with the relevant District Officer(s) of HAD and the Director of Housing, will be responsible for providing food, blankets and other emergency items when victims of a disaster are found to be in need. The Department has three emergency relief duty teams in Hong Kong, Kowloon and the New Territories respectively, which can be deployed in an emergency. Each of these teams is headed by a Duty Officer (Emergency Relief) who can be contacted through PHQCCC, and who should comply with the Police's requests as far as possible.

30. The Director of Social Welfare will decide whether, and if so, at what time, facilities under their area of responsibility will be closed, and to advise parents and those taking care of the disabled and elderly not to take children, disabled or the elderly to their centres.

Transport Department

31. The Commissioner for Transport will be responsible for coordinating public transport through close liaison with the respective transport operators and in consultation with other departments to develop traffic and transport contingency plans. The Department will also be responsible for alerting and liaising with public transport operators and tunnel and bridge operators and mitigating the effects of traffic and transport problems, and activating the Transport Department Emergency Transport Coordination Centre to provide support to EMSC when required.

Environment, Transport and Works Bureau (ETWB)

32. The Secretary for Environment, Transport and Works (SETW) will be responsible for co-ordination of emergency/remedial operations of Drainage Services Department, Civil Engineering Department, Highway Department, Territory Development Department, Water Supplies Department and other departments in the Housing, Planning and Lands (HPL) Group of Departments. If necessary he will provide a Liaison Officer to EMSC to be the ETWB Liaison Officer, who will liaise with DSD, CED, HyD, TDD, WSD and other departments in the HPL Group of departments and to provide necessary advice to EMSC.



Annex 9.2**Responsibilities of Non-Government Organisations**

1. The following organisations will be responsible for transmitting or broadcasting information on precautionary measures to their customers, clients and members of the public, in consultation with and on the advice of the relevant Government Departments. They should also inform ISD and the Office of the Telecommunications Authority (OFTA) of any disruption to any of their services -

- A. ATV
- B. Commercial Radio
- C. Hong Kong Telecom
- D. Hutchison Communications
- E. Metro News Radio
- F. New T&T Hong Kong
- G. New World Telephone Co Ltd
- H. Radio Television Hong Kong
- I. TVB
- J. Wharf Cable Ltd

2. The following organisations will be responsible for keeping the Marine Department fully informed of any disruption to their operations during a disaster -

- A. Asia Terminals Co Ltd
- B. COSCO - HIT Terminals (HK) Ltd
- C. Hong Kong International Terminals Ltd
- D. Hong Kong Pilots Associations Ltd
- E. Hong Kong United Dockyards Ltd
- F. Kowloon Wharf Terminal & Warehouse Ltd
- G. Modern Terminals Ltd
- H. Sealand Orient Terminals Ltd

3. The following organisations will be responsible for advising the TD Duty Officer, or its Emergency Transport Co-ordination Centre, when activated, and central Government, of any likely disruptions to the provision of their public transport services due to a disaster -

- A. All tunnels management companies/agencies
- B. Citybus Ltd
- C. Discovery Bay Transportation Services Ltd
- D. Hong Kong & Kowloon Ferry Ltd
- E. Hong Kong & Yaumati Ferry Co Ltd
- F. Hongkong Tramways Co Ltd
- G. Kowloon Canton Railway Corporation
- H. Kowloon Motor Bus Co (1933) Ltd
- I. Long Win Bus Co Ltd
- J. Mass Transit Railway Corporation
- K. New Lantao Bus Co Ltd
- L. New World First Bus Services Ltd
- M. Star Ferry Co Ltd
- N. Tsing Ma Management Ltd.

4. The following organisations will be responsible for advising the Marine Department of any disruptions to their services resulting from a disaster –

Companies Operating Ferries between Hong Kong, The Mainland and Macau

5. The following companies will be responsible for informing the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department, the Fire Services Department and central Government of any disruption to services, and for making safe, and effecting prompt repairs to, their supply lines and station -

- A. China Light & Power Co Ltd
- B. Hong Kong Electric Co Ltd
- C. Hong Kong & China Gas Co Ltd

