

## Press Releases

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Public consultation on Mandatory Building Inspection  
launched today  
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The Government today (October 21) launched a public consultation on Mandatory Building Inspection, which will last for about three months.

Announcing the details of the proposed scheme, the Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands, Mr Michael Suen, said there was an urgent need for the Government to introduce the Mandatory Building Inspection Scheme (MBIS).

Mr Suen said the results of the first stage public consultation on Building Management and Maintenance, which were released early this year, pointed to a community consensus on owners' responsibility to properly maintain their buildings, including bearing the necessary financial costs. "The community also generally supports the Government in introducing mandatory building inspections," Mr Suen said.

Guided by this broad public preference, the Government is launching the second stage public consultation -- "Building Management and Maintenance" to seek the public's views on the implementation details of the proposed MBIS and related issues.

The Government has adopted five principles in drawing up the proposed scheme:

- (1) The scheme should cover essential safety items only in order to ensure public safety, but not cause undue burden on owners;
- (2) The scheme should be easy to understand and comply with;
- (3) While owners have the ultimate responsibility to keep their buildings under good repair, appropriate assistance should be made available to owners in need;
- (4) Support measures should be introduced to ensure the quality of service providers; and
- (5) The scheme should be easy to administer. The Government should follow the "Big Market, Small Government" approach in order to minimise the cost of compliance to be borne by the community as a whole.

Based on the above principles, the Government proposes details of the MBIS as follows:

\* Owners of private buildings aged 30 years or above are required to engage qualified inspectors (Authorised Persons or Registered Structural Engineers) to inspect their buildings and undertake the necessary repair works as specified by the inspectors;

\* Inspection to be done every seven years, counting from the date when the owners were notified of the last round of inspections by the Buildings Department; and

\* Inspection items to mainly cover those in the common areas like external walls, structural elements, drainage, building fire safety elements, and unauthorised building works posing imminent danger.

In response to the spate of window failures this year, the Government has promptly introduced various measures to assist owners in window maintenance as well as stepping up public education. The Government has also drawn up in this consultation document two options for mandatory window inspection involving different levels of regulation to be imposed on owners, including regular window inspections and requiring owners to carry out one-off window inspections within a specified time frame.

The Government will carefully listen to the views of all sectors before making a decision on window inspections in view of the need to take into account a number of considerations, including the sheer number of windows involved, the fact that entry into private premises is usually required to carry out window inspections and maintenance, the burden on the public, and the resources and difficulties involved in implementing mandatory window inspections.

In order to facilitate building inspections and enhancement of window safety by the owners, the Government will introduce a package of support measures, including ensuring the professional standard of service providers, promulgating guidelines on and setting standards of building inspection and rectification for service providers, auditing the inspection reports submitted by service providers, publishing a guide for owners on building inspection and rectification, and soliciting the agreement of non-government organisations to publish advisory fee levels for building inspections, etc.

The Government will also consider establishing a voluntary building classification scheme run by non-government organisations to give good ratings and recognition to buildings with proper management and maintenance through market forces and also consider exempting these

buildings from the MBIS.

In addition, the Government will explore the need for and feasibility of further improving the existing mechanism and of setting up an alternative simple mechanism to resolve building management and maintenance disputes. Since this matter involves complex legal and resource considerations, the Government will listen to the views of the community carefully before making a decision.

"The Government, in past months, has already put in place a host of short- to medium-term measures. The various types of assistance have been well-received by the community and have made significant headway in demonstrating the benefits of proper building care," Mr Suen said.

He stressed that building on this solid foundation, the Government would further provide assistance to owners.

Based on the successful experience in the operation of a joint office in Sham Shui Po on a pilot basis to tackle the problem of water seepage, the Government plans to launch a three-year programme to expand the joint office model to other districts, under which the Buildings Department and Food and Environmental Hygiene Department will jointly offer assistance to owners in tackling the problem.

Moreover, the Hong Kong Housing Society and the Urban Renewal Authority have agreed to enhance their financial and technical assistance to owners, including raising the ceiling of their subsidies, and assisting more owners in the formation of owners' corporations, etc.

Subject to community consensus on the proposals made in the consultation paper, the Government will immediately embark on the preparation work in drawing up the legislative proposals. The Government plans to introduce the necessary legislative proposals to the Legislative Council in 2007.


The public consultation on Mandatory Building Inspection will continue until January 31, next year. The Government will exchange views with the Legislative Council, District Councils, concerned sectors and professional groups during the consultation period. A total of four public forums will also be held in November and December in Sheung Wan, Tsim Sha Tsui, Tsuen Wan and North District to gauge public views. Details of the forums are contained in the consultation document.

Copies of the consultation document and leaflets can be obtained from the Housing, Planning and Lands Bureau (HPLB), the Buildings Department and various District Offices; or downloaded from the HPLB website (<http://www.hplb.gov.hk/>).


Members of the public are welcome to submit their views by fax (2845 3489), by e-mail ([bmm@hplb.gov.hk](mailto:bmm@hplb.gov.hk)) or by post (Urban Renewal Unit, Housing, Planning and Lands Bureau, 9/F Murray Building, Garden Road, Hong Kong).

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