

**News Clipping**

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# Pro team volunteers to check roofs

Phoenix Un

The Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors has formed a volunteer team that will offer free, quick inspections of green rooftops at 100 schools or charity organizations after saying existing laws are sufficient for regulation.

The team will comprise 100 institute members, and schools and charities can apply for help by sending an e-mail to [bsd\\_volunteer@hkis.org.hk](mailto:bsd_volunteer@hkis.org.hk).

David Chan Wah-wai, former head of the institute's building surveying division, said the team was formed as a "social responsibility."

He said the government never requested for such a team to be formed.

But the institute decided to establish it on Monday – one day before the Education Bureau and Buildings Department sent out a letter to schools reminding them to comply with government regulations over green roofs.

The institute said the bureau's letter was too broad for non-professionals to understand.

"Our volunteer surveyors will have a quick scan over the rooftops, and if any potential problems are observed, we will recommend they look for assistance from relevant professionals," Chan said.

He said he had heard school principals expressing anxiety about rooftop safety, and he hoped they wouldn't demolish the green tops out of fear.

"What is done cannot be undone. I don't want the principals to tear down the green rooftops because most of them are of low risk," Chan said. He added schools have limited budgets, and the team wants to help schools that receive no government subsidies.

He also believes City University – where a rooftop collapsed on Friday – had been "a bit too cautious" in removing its three other green rooftops before any professional checks.

The institute's immediate past president, Vincent Ho Kui-yip, said they may announce details about the volunteer team by early next week, and may start the first briefing session for schools in two weeks' time.

Ho said in his analysis, the collapsed CityU rooftop was an inaccessible long-span structure made of light steel measuring 40 meters by 34 meters.



Volunteers to inspect green rooftops include, from far left, institute members Kenny Tse, Vincent Ho and David Chan, following the incident at CityU. PHOENIX UN and SINGTAO

"There shouldn't be any structures on top of it unless it is necessary," he said. And even if something was placed on top of it, the works have to be done "very carefully."

Ho believes the Buildings Ordinance was carefully written, clearly setting out building works that need structural plans to be submitted for approval by the Buildings Department, and he

saw no urgency for any changes. He said it is "impossible for a law to spell out clearly that a structural plan is needed if the proposed construction exceeds a certain size with a certain material."

He added: "The law only states the broad principle. Minute details will be up to professional judgment."

He suggested including some greening works into the Minor Works Control

System, in which proprietors only need to submit documents to the Buildings Department under the surveillance of professionals.

"By saving time and money, it would both ensure safety and encourage greening works. Also, the professional will be held accountable if any accidents happen," Ho said. [phoenix.un@singtaonews.com](mailto:phoenix.un@singtaonews.com)

## Risk rules on green installations in the works

New guidelines will be issued on risks posed by green rooftops after the government announced urgent inspections of all government facilities.

Responding to questions at the Legislative Council yesterday, acting Secretary for Development Eric Ma Siu-cheung said the Buildings Department circular will inform the public whether green installations pose high risks and require immediate actions.

The Buildings Department is checking government facilities in batches according to levels of their risks.

Checks have been completed at Tin Shui Wai swimming pool, Victoria Park swimming pool, Tseung Kwan O government complex and Ko Shan Theater New Wing. They were initially judged to be low risk.

The Housing Department also inspected eight rooftops in public housing estates and found they pose minimal risk.

Legislators quizzed Ma on whether City University should have submitted structural plans to the Buildings Department for the collapsed rooftop.

"There is no agreement on whether a structural plan



Eric Ma

is needed. Some professionals say yes and some say no. Is there a gray area in the law?" asked legislator Martin Liao Cheung-kong.

Ma said he could not comment as the investigation was ongoing.

"However, we will look into whether more guidelines from the Buildings Department are necessary," he said.

Lawmakers also questioned who should bear the responsibility for the construction works. They were told responsibility should be with the property owner, not with professionals who have the biggest responsibility.

Secretary for Education Eddie Ng Hak-kim told legislators that at least 66 schools added green rooftops to existing buildings, with structural plans submitted to the Buildings Department.

Meanwhile, City University said civil engineer-barrister James Lau Chi-wang, who is not from the university, has been added as the ninth member of the probe team. His inclusion comes after the university was criticized for not having outsiders on the team probing the collapse.

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