6. CHAPTER 6

INFORMATION DISSEMINATION

6.1 The Government attaches great importance to communicating with its stakeholders, the public and the media. We must aim to provide information to the public in a timely manner, outlining the development of any incident including the situation as it involves HKRs caught in its aftermath, giving suitable advice for HKRs and their families and publicizing the work and achievements of any ERT deployed outside of Hong Kong.

6.2 The most important task required is to provide accurate and timely information to the public. This information will be in one of two forms. It will be either:

- what the public needs to know, such as advice on areas to be avoided, details of those affected, travel advisories, emergency contact numbers and emergency arrangements; or
- major announcements and development of the situation which are of concern to the community.

6.3 The Government must work quickly and efficiently to provide the public with information. We must however accept that the media with its more complex information gathering, verification and dissemination systems, will often be able to respond to news stories quicker than we can. Nevertheless, for both forms of information, we have a responsibility to keep the public as up-to-date as possible.

6.4 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 effectively 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.

6.5 This separate channel operates through the ISD. ISD liaison officers if deployed with an ERT will coordinate on-site assistance to the media, and the
Combined Information Centre (CIC) will handle both the response to general media inquiries and the dissemination of other information.

6.6 Experience has shown that any external deployment will attract intense on-scene media interest from the Hong Kong media. The ERT team leader will ensure that all efforts are made to ensure that the ERT facilitates reasonable media access to their operations.

6.7 It is essential that all Bureaux / Departments understand the importance of assisting the ISD in its information dissemination role. Although this assistance should not be allowed to interfere with the operation of an ERT, Bureaux / Departments must factor the need to provide assistance into the way that they respond as a department.

6.8 An EE deployment will attract intense community, local and international 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 EE 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.

6.9 Similarly, the ESU and the EMSC will liaise closely with HAD 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.

6.10 All practical means and effective channels, such as SB, ImmD and ISD websites should be used to alert and disseminate information to the public during emergencies. During EE situations maximum use should be made of the SB and ImmD websites.