1. CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Significant emergencies or disasters and other sudden incidents occurring outside the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) can kill, injure or otherwise seriously affect the personal safety of Hong Kong residents (HKRs) caught within their areas of influence. In order to provide effective assistance and support to HKRs under these circumstances, the HKSAR Government (the Government) is prepared to implement suitable contingency measures such as special arrangements to bring back HKRs stranded outside Hong Kong and the deployment of emergency response to offer assistance to HKRs in the affected areas.

1.2 The calamities can be natural in origin, such as earthquakes, floods, tidal waves, storms, landslides or fires, or can be man-made, involving aircraft, ship, train, or bus accidents, collapsed buildings or industrial incidents. They may even involve infectious diseases, criminal events such as terrorist bombings, aircraft hijacking, civil unrest or involvement of HKRs in zones of conflict.

1.3 While this contingency plan primarily focuses upon the provision of assistance to HKRs caught in distress in emergencies outside the HKSAR, it is relevant to mention here that the Government also provides information on travel risk to HKRs through the Outbound Travel Alert (OTA) System. For details of the OTA, please see Annexure 1.1

1.4 Depending on the type and extent of the external emergency and the particular circumstances of each case, the Government’s response may simply take the form of provision of a contribution to international aid, without resorting to physical contingency measures or deployment of personnel.
However, where a large number of HKRs are killed, injured or otherwise affected, the physical deployment of emergency response personnel is likely to be required.

1.5 Overseas emergency assistance may also need to go beyond the immediate needs of just HKRs. As a modern affluent society, Hong Kong has a moral obligation to assist those less fortunate or those who are in distress. In addition, the need to provide assistance from the point of view of the wider interests of Hong Kong cannot be ignored.
Outbound Travel Alert (OTA) System

The HKSAR Government provides information on travel risk to Hong Kong Residents (HKRs) through the Outbound Travel Alert (OTA) System.

2. Where there are signs of threat in certain places which may affect the personal safety of HKRs, Security Bureau (SB) will monitor the situation and assess the risk, and where appropriate according to the risk assessment, issue an OTA.¹

3. The OTA System is based on a colour code with standard key messages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario Showing</th>
<th>Amber</th>
<th>Red</th>
<th>Black</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signs of threat</td>
<td>Significant threat</td>
<td>Severe threat</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Message To Public</th>
<th>Monitor situation; exercise caution</th>
<th>Adjust travel plans; avoid non-essential travel</th>
<th>Avoid all travel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

4. The colour alert will be promulgated through press releases and the OTA webpage [www.sb.gov.hk/eng/ota / www.sb.gov.hk/chi/ota]. The webpages of the Immigration Department, the Information Services Department, the Tourism Commission, the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong (TIC), and the Travel Health Service of the Department of Health all have hyperlinks to the OTA webpage.

5. The OTA webpage is also hyperlinked to the webpage of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China on outbound travel information and that of China’s National Tourism Authority. It will also provide access to the travel

¹ The Department of Health will continue to promulgate information on public health situations overseas and related recommendations on their webpage, based on the World Health Organization’s advice and other relevant information.
information webpages of the Australian, Canadian and the United Kingdom governments which contain comprehensive databases of travel risks to other countries around the world.

6. HKRs have freedom to travel and to enter or leave HK. Even when a travel alert is issued against a destination, it remains a HKR’s personal decision whether he chooses to continue the journey and travel to the place. The Government will not infringe the right of HKRs or restrain their outbound travelling. Instead, we aim to facilitate a HKR’s decision by providing, on best endeavour basis and through the OTA System, up-to-date information on the risk (if any) posed to the personal safety of HKRs in the relevant place.

7. As part of the overall contingency plan to assist HKRs, the Government may make special arrangements with the airlines, for seats on commercial flights to be reserved (“reserved seats”) or special flights to be chartered (“chartered flights”), to ensure priority and organised return arrangements for HKRs in need of the special assistance. Where necessary, the Government may also seek assistance from the Mainland authorities to make use of Mainland’s chartered flights, to bring back HKRs expeditiously.

8. There is no direct or automatic linkage between a particular level of the OTA and possible arrangements for, say “reserved seats” or “chartered flights”. The latter depends on availability of commercial flight operations, relevant airlines’ assistance, and the number of HKRs requiring special assistance and the circumstances they are facing. The OTA, however, serves to provide an appropriate alert to HKRs, based on the risk assessment that a particular place may present to the personal safety of HKRs there.