

Harbourfront Commission

For discussion
on 8 March 2012

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An Overview of the Hong Kong Police Force's Policy on Crowd Management

PURPOSE

Waterfront promenades (such as the promenades in Tsim Sha Tsui and Wanchai) are popular spots for public events (e.g. watching fireworks) during festive seasons. It is expected that the Advance Promenade in the new Central harbourfront to be opened later this year, as well as the adjoining Tamar Park, will become popular options for festive celebrations. The purpose of this paper is to elucidate the policy of the Hong Kong Police Force on crowd management for public events, including those in harbourfront areas.

THE STANCE OF THE FORCE

2. It must be recognized that with Hong Kong's crowded environment, the holding of public events inevitably causes inconvenience to others and may create nuisance to the vicinity. It also carries a potential public safety threat and the possibility of public disorder. This necessitates police deployment at the venue. The objective of the Police Force is to facilitate every lawful public event, to ensure that it is conducted in a lawful, orderly and safe manner, to be achieved with least inconvenience to the public.

MEASURES ON CROWD MANAGEMENT

Planning

3. Before the formulation of operational plan for crowd management, the police commander in charge will conduct risk

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assessment of the operation, taking into consideration of the nature of the activity, the location at which it is held, possible number of participants, traffic condition and weather. Having assessed the risk and appreciated the situation, the relevant commander will formulate the plan for the operation comprising but not limited to policing strategy, crowd management measures and resources deployment in a bid to facilitate the event. Crowd management measures are particularly essential to festive events where participants would normally arrive much earlier before the actual time of the event, hence causing congestion to the venue and the adjacent areas for a lengthy period of time, to be met with an influx of crowds shortly before the event.

General Tactics

4. To avoid possible danger caused by the influx of participants to the venue from all directions, police would facilitate a one-way flow of crowd leading them to a clear single direction in an orderly manner. Ingress to and exit from the venue will be arranged at designed locations commensurate with the geographical setting and the orderly flow of the crowd. Likewise, signage will be arranged at conspicuous places directing the crowd supplemented by audio broadcast on a regular basis.

5. With reference to the crowd density and the geographical setting, including the presence of any incline, decline or bottle-neck area, tidal flow will also be conducted by dividing the crowd into smaller ones so that they would proceed in a controlled manner in phases. To avoid over-congestion and to contain the scene when necessary, buffer zones will be established between the divided crowds. To ensure the safety of the crowd, the overall condition will be put under close monitor by appropriately equipped officers deployed at high spots, and such officers will carry out control measures at the spot and report to the command post regularly.

Equipment

6. In performing crowd management duties, officers on the ground will be appropriately equipped. Mills barriers are the primary equipment for facilitating the segregation and orderly flow of crowd, used in conjunction with architectural and road features e.g. central divider on roads. Traffic cones and cordon tapes will also be used, for demarcation and traffic diversion purposes.

Emergency Vehicular Access

7. Emergency Vehicular Access is also a common measure adopted in large public events. It refers to an access specifically vacated adjacent to the events for the passage of emergency vehicles so that casualty and other emergencies could be timely attended to. This measure is regularly adopted in public processions, crowd management events and other large-scale public events, such as the “Standard Chartered Hong Kong Marathon” and fireworks display.

CONCLUSION

8. The above crowd management policy is generally applicable to the harbourfront areas. Whilst the Force endeavours to employ every measure possible to ensure the safety of the crowd at public events, the support and assistance from other stakeholders are also indispensable to this end. We will keep our strategies and operations under review constantly as well as to maintain a strong rapport with the stakeholders.

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