

## News Clipping

Client / Product : The Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors  
Publication : South China Morning Post  
Date : 26 May 2016 (Thursday)  
Page : CITY1

### ACCIDENT

# GREEN ROOFS SHOULD BE TRACKED, SURVEYORS SAY

**Government must be able** to keep tabs on roof projects but not hinder their development, top surveyor says following CityU roof collapse

Ernest Kao and Raymond Yeung

Green roofs should be categorised and reported as "minor works" projects to enhance their regulation in the city's existing building safety framework, according to a local surveyors' trade group.

Former Institute of Surveyors president Vincent Ho Kui-yip said yesterday there was a need for a regulatory system that allowed the government to track green roofs in Hong Kong without making it so inconvenient that it would hinder their development.

This comes amid lingering questions as to whether plans must be submitted and approved for all green roof projects to be considered legal, after it was revealed that City University did not do so for the greening work on the roof of a sports hall that suddenly caved in last week.

Current regulations rely heavily on the initiative of owners in submitting a plan for approval.

"Right now even the government can't tell you how many green roofs there are," Ho said. "Incorporating green roof projects into the minor works control system would make it a more simplified process ... and would serve as a more efficient regulatory mechanism."

Under such a system, proponents would have to seek prior approval for building plans to carry out minor work that is "smaller in scale and poses a lower level of risk". Statutory requirements would be "simplified" and aimed at improving efficiency and flexibility.

The institute said it had formed a volunteer team to help non-government-funded schools inspect their green roofs free of charge in the next three months.

"Many of these schools' green roofs are often done by landscapers only," said surveyor David Chan Wah-wai, who is leading the team.

The Education Bureau issued a circular to all primary and secondary schools on Tuesday

reminding them of the need to comply with regulations for green roof projects and to get professional advice. But the institute said some schools might not fully understand the technicalities of the circular and would require some professional help.

Last Friday, the roof of City University's Chan Tai Ho Multi-Purpose Hall caved in without warning, injuring three people. The green pitch on the rooftop was planted in December last year and only finished in April.



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VINCENT HO, INSTITUTE OF SURVEYORS

Lawmakers took officials to task at an emergency Legislative Council inquiry yesterday. Accountancy sector lawmaker Kenneth Leung asked if the government planned to assign criminal and civil liability to accredited professionals who advised on greening works in the city.

Development undersecretary Eric Ma Siu-cheung said the Buildings Ordinance clearly stated a building owner was the main responsible party, but he refused to comment on the CityU case specifically as an investigation was under way.

Ma said the Architectural Services Department had already inspected green projects on government buildings with "large-span metal structures" like the one which collapsed, and the Housing Department had not seen any safety risks in green roofs at eight public housing estates.

Education minister Eddie Ng Hak-kim was criticised for what lawmakers said was the government offloading responsibility to schools for inspecting greening projects. The bureau's district officers would follow up on 66 school roofs across the city, he said.