

APPENDIX C

---

**Highways Department's  
Public Complaints and  
Enquiries Handling  
Procedure**

Ref. : (111) in HYD 4/1/11

Highways Department  
5/F Ho Man Tin Government Offices  
88 Chung Hau Street  
Ho Man Tin  
Kowloon

9 March 2001

## **Highways Department General Circular No. 1/2001**

### **Public Complaints & Enquiries Handling Procedure**

This circular sets out guidelines and procedures to be followed on receipt of complaints/enquiries directly from members of the public or through other Government departments or agencies. The circular should be re-circulated every six months and staff who regularly deal with complaints/enquiries should be given personal copies. It supersedes Highways Department General Circular No. 1/98 which is hereby cancelled.

#### **2. Scope of the Procedure**

This procedure is applicable to all public complaints and enquiries addressed to Highways Department (HyD) from different sources including telephone, fax, letters, in-person, e-mail, media, and other public complaints and enquiries referred by other Government departments or agencies.

#### **3. Attitude to Complaints/Enquiries**

The response to complaints/enquiries is an important interface between the general public and HyD. The manner of handling complaints/enquiries contributes greatly to our public image and credibility. The essence is to try to mitigate any dissatisfaction. So be pleasant and helpful and, as far as possible, be positive and constructive.

Replies to complaints/enquiries should be accurate, clear, concise and expressed in layman term and in a courteous manner.

#### **4. Complaints/Enquiries Direct from the Public**

##### **4.1 Telephone Complaints/Enquiries**

Telephone complaints/enquiries from the public should be recorded with all details necessary for an investigation together with the name and telephone number of the complainant. The recipient of the complaint/enquiry should give an assurance that the query will be answered as soon as possible. If the recipient is not the one responsible for handling the complaint/enquiry, the recorded information should be passed to the responsible officer immediately for action. The

latter should inform the complainant on the progress of the matter until action is completed. If the complainant requests a written reply, this should be arranged.

#### 4.2 Written Complaints/Enquiries

On receipt of a complaint/enquiry letter, the General Registry of the office concerned should immediately acknowledge receipt by issuing a GF 17 receipt card.

The letter should be referred to the responsible officer or section as soon as possible for investigation, remedial action and reply.

Anonymous letters from the public should not be disregarded but should be dealt with in a similar manner as above although written replies are not possible.

#### 4.3 Complaints/Enquiries in Person

Counter staff should always show courtesy to the public, particularly the complainant. They should either refer the complainant to the responsible officer or give him/her the address and telephone number if the officer is not accommodated in the same office building. If the complainant is willing to give details, the counter staff should record these together with the name, contact telephone number and address of the complainant. The case should then be referred to the responsible officer for remedial action and reply.

#### 4.4 Complaints/Enquiries on Site

Site staff sometimes receive complaints/enquiries on site. Depending on the circumstances, they should explain the situation to the complainant and assure that remedial action will be taken promptly.

If the complainant is still not satisfied, the site staff should advise him/her that the Government would explore all possible measures to make good the situation and he/she will be informed of the outcome in due course. The names and telephone numbers of both parties should be exchanged. The site staff should then discuss the matter with their supervisors. The level of supervisor to be alerted will depend on the nature and seriousness of the complaint. If there is uncertainty, the next rank up should be consulted.

#### 4.5 Complaints/Enquiries through e-mail

Complaints/enquiries received through e-mail should be handled similarly with written complaints/enquiries. The e-mail should be forwarded to the responsible officer or section as soon as possible for investigation, remedial action and reply.

#### 4.6 Complaints/Enquiries using standard report form

Complaints/enquiries using standard report forms, such as “Damage or Defects Report”, “Fault Report on Traffic Signs/Road Markings” or other standard report forms, should be handled promptly. Reply to these complaints/enquiries should be made in accordance with the

above procedures depending on the contact information left, such as telephone number, fax number, address or e-mail address.

## **5. Complaints/Enquiries Referred by other Government Departments or Agencies**

These complaints/enquiries should be processed in a similar manner as those complaints/enquiries from the public. Replies should either be sent to complainants direct or to the Government departments from whom the complaints were referred.

## **6. Complaints/Enquiries from the News Media**

The key to good news media relations is a speedy reply. However, it should not override normal precautions concerning the accuracy of information to be given. The draft reply should be passed to Senior Engineer/Highways Complaints (SE/HC) for final vetting before issue. Please also refer to Highways Departmental General Circular 1/99 "Guidance to Media Contact" on detail procedure.

### **6.1 Complaints/Enquiries through Telephone or FAX Message**

Complaints/enquiries through telephone or fax message from the mass media (newspaper, radio and television) are normally directed to SE/HC. These complaints/enquiries are referred to the action officer for investigation and remedial action, who should give feedback to SE/HC on the same day or the following day, and should keep him/her informed of the progress until remedial works have been completed.

### **6.2 Letters/Articles of Complaint/Enquiry Published in Newspapers**

It is Government policy that whenever possible queries or adverse comments contained in letters/articles published in newspapers should be answered. Opportunity should be taken to give factual replies and explain Government policies and actions.

Letters or articles published concerning HyD will normally be referred by SE/HC to the relevant Head of Office for action and reply. However, action on these letters or articles need not be held up until a formal referral is received from SE/HC but should begin at once aiming at the reply being published as soon as possible. Replies to newspapers should normally be submitted through SE/HC.

## **7. Complaints/Enquiries Relating to other Departments**

If a complaint/enquiry relates to another Government department or party, it should be referred to that department or party in writing with the consent of the complainant for action immediately. In all cases, written records of such referral and reply shall be maintained.

## **8. Communication with Complainant**

Written and verbal communications in connection with a complaint/enquiry should be in the language of the complainant.

## **9. Priorities**

Top priority should be given to complaints involving public safety. Immediate action should be taken to rectify the situation to avoid further accidents. Priority should also be given to complaints/enquiries affecting a large population of the community.

## **10. Replies**

Replies to complaints/enquiries should be made in accordance with the manner described in the above paragraphs and within the time limit as stated in the latest HyD Performance Pledge. If not possible, interim replies should be sent within this period stating that full replies will be given as soon as possible and explaining briefly the reasons for the delay.

Replies to complaints/enquiries should contain all details necessary to satisfy the complainants that the complaints/enquiries have been properly dealt with, particularly if the outcomes do not meet their expectation.

For written/e-mail replies, signing/issuing officers should be at least at Senior Professional level. Copies of e-mail correspondence for public complaints/enquiries should be kept in appropriate files for record.

Written replies to news media should be issued by SE/HC in accordance with Highways Departmental General Circular 1/99 "Guidance to Media Contact".

## **11. Supervision and Clearance of Replies**

All HyD offices handling complaints should each set up a Bring Up System to enable supervision of complaints/enquiries by the respective Head of Office and to ensure public complaints/enquiries are handled systematically and promptly.

Some complaints/enquiries received by the Headquarters are referred to the responsible offices for action. Their replies should be copied to SE/HC for information and record.

For complaint/enquiry which touches on sensitive policy matters or may provoke adverse political sentiment, the responsible officer should bring up the issue to the Division Head immediately. The Division Head shall assess the implication of the issue and seek advice from the Head of Office, DDHy or DHy if necessary on a line-to-take for the reply. A draft reply shall then be sent to the D3 officer for clearance before it is dispatched.

If a draft reply is required to be signed by DHy for a very significant issue, the Head of Office should send his draft reply to DDHy for vetting before passing to DHy for signature.

Head of Office should exercise his judgement whether a particular issue is important enough for DHy's personal attention. In case of doubt, they should always seek DHy's verbal advice.

## **12. Appeals**

An appeal lodged by a complainant about a decision should be considered by an officer senior to the one who made the decision and refer to SE/HC for coordination purpose.

## **13. Confidentiality of the Complainant's Personal Data**

All personal information of the complainant should be kept strictly confidential in accordance with the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance. Without the complainant's consent, his/her personal information should not be disclosed to any other parties.

## **14. Remarks**

Any queries should be addressed to SE/HC on tel. no. 2762 3305.

( Y C L o )  
Director of Highways