

Welcome Speech by Dr P Y Lam, Director of Health
Symposium on Emergency Preparedness and
Management of Mass Fatalities
8 November 2011

Distinguished Guests, Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, Good Morning.

It is my pleasure and honour to welcome you all to this Symposium on Emergency Preparedness and Management of Mass Fatalities.

We organize a symposium on this particular topic as we see that the world is facing increasing threats of natural disasters, epidemics, conflicts and violence. Just to name a few, the earthquakes in Sichuan and Chile, the tsunami in Japan, the riots in London, the extreme weather in USA and the current floods in Thailand. They have devastating effects on human health.

Hong Kong, being one of the most densely populated metropolitan cities, is no exception. In the past decade, Hong Kong has experienced public health emergencies and incidents involving multiple fatalities. Our Department has worked hand-in-hand with other departments and agencies in these emergencies. We fought bravely in the epidemics of bird flu, SARS and human swine flu; we also sent officers abroad to assist in the aftermaths of Sichuan Earthquake, and the Manila hostage incident.

One important lesson learned from these incidents is that emergency preparedness is the key to effective emergency response. Moreover, incidents involving mass casualties and fatalities require strong multi-disciplinary collaboration. This symposium will provide expert knowledge and experience for the Department of Health and our partners, and the Hong Kong SAR as a whole, to enhance our capacity to respond to major incidents.

Today we will hear from renowned speakers from the Medical Examiner Special Operational Response Team of New York City, who will share with us their unique experience. Our local speakers from the Security Bureau, the Hospital Authority, and the Department of Health will also share the local experience in emergency response.

I am also very pleased to see experts from different disciplines in this symposium. We have officers from Fire Services Department, police officers, doctors from emergency departments, public health officers, forensic pathologists, forensic odontologists, social workers; and a number of important paramedical and NGOs dedicated to disaster relief operations.

This symposium is a good opportunity for us to learn together, to foster cooperation, to interchange ideas, and build capacity to get ready for any upcoming challenges. I am confident that you will bring home new ideas at the end of the day and help enhance the overall emergency preparedness in Hong Kong.

I wish that every one of you would find the Symposium inspirational and rewarding, and I wish the symposium every success.

Thank you.