

QC eyes institutionalized contingency plan during emergencies

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Following the deadly shootout between law enforcers at a Quezon City mall on Wednesday, Mayor Joy Belmonte is pushing for the immediate passage of an ordinance that will institutionalize a contingency plan during armed encounters, fires, earthquakes and other emergencies.

The ordinance, according to Belmonte, will minimize or eliminate threats to the lives and safety of innocent civilians and limit possible damages to property.

The mayor met on Friday with top city officials and representatives from various agencies to discuss the matter following the shooting incident that claimed the lives of four people.

“We have been conducting fire and earthquake drills regularly, but the event on Wednesday night called for a more coordinated, detailed crisis management approach in dealing with other incidents causing public disturbance and threat to public safety,” she said.

Belmonte said the proposed measure should mandate law enforcement agencies to have an indemnification fund for innocent victims who may be affected by operations such as those conducted by the Philippine National Police and the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency.

“Who will compensate the Grab drivers and employees trapped in the establishments? How about the damaged vehicles in the area? Economic losses and other damages brought about by operations such as what transpired last Wednesday should not be swept under the rug,” she said.

“While we understand the nature of such operations could lead to collateral damage, still we should not let unwitting businesses and civilians suffer in the end,” added the mayor.

Belmonte said the plan must also include provisions that would help regain the confidence of the public in the area affected by an event, especially when it transpired in a commercial or populated area.

“The stigma and other effects of an event to the business and the community should be addressed,” she said.

During the meeting, officials also agreed to implement protocols for crowd safety and control during fires, earthquakes, armed encounters and other incidents.

An incident command system shall also be activated to monitor emergency response, such as by establishing zoning protocols for crowd management.

The city government will also mobilize its emergency operations center to house representatives from operating departments to improve coordination and mobilization during such events.

Belmonte said the ordinance should include a provision on allowing access to private roads owned by subdivisions and villages as an alternate route for trapped motorists.

“Many were trapped for hours and motorists can’t pass by private roads if they were not homeowners. During such emergencies, the local government should have temporary control

over these roads so we can minimize traffic jams and ensure passage of motorists. Responding authorities were also delayed by the standstill,” she added.

The mayor earlier said that the local **People’s Law Enforcement Board** may conduct a separate investigation of the shootout to look into the matter of safety of civilians in the area.