

Ordinance to fine-tune plans during shootouts

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The **Quezon City local government** is pushing for the immediate passage of an ordinance that would institutionalize a contingency plan during emergencies to limit possible damage to property and minimize, if not eliminate, threats to the lives and safety of innocent civilians. Following the meeting of top city officials last Friday afternoon with representatives of concerned government agencies and affected business establishments, in response to last Wednesday's shootout between members of the Quezon City Police District and Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency, city officials stressed the need to safeguard the welfare of the public during armed encounters, fires, earthquakes and other emergencies.

“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,” a city official said. In particular, the meeting emphasized the need for law enforcement agencies to inform the local government of its operations and have an indemnification fund for innocent victims of these operations.

These details will be contained in the envisioned ordinance.

“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. 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,” an official remarked.

Another aspect agreed upon during the meeting was the need to implement protocols for crowd safety and control during fires, earthquakes, armed encounters and other incidents. Regular simulation exercises to fine-tune these protocols should be conducted.

The ordinance should also include a provision allowing access to private roads owned by subdivisions and villages as an alternate route for trapped motorists.

“Many were trapped for hours and motorists couldn'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,” the city official added.