

## 2011 Year-end Review of the Fire Services Department

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Following is the speech by the Director of Fire Services, Mr. CHAN Chor-kam, at the Department's 2011 Year-end Review today (16 January, 2012): -

This is the first time I host the Year-end Review press conference since I have assumed the post of Director of Fire Services from 1 October last year. Despite the many difficulties and challenges in the execution of our work in the past year, the Department continued to provide Hong Kong people with highly efficient and quality services, with the concerted effort and dedication of all the colleagues. On the whole, the Department has managed to achieve effective results in various areas of its work. I am going to review the work and services of the Department in 2011 and will take this opportunity to introduce our new initiatives in the future.

### **Fire-fighting and Rescue Service [Video](#)**

In 2011, there were a total of 34 188 fire calls, representing a decrease of 15.8% (6 416 cases) as against 2010; the number of No. 3 or above Alarm fires was 19, which was higher than that of last year (16 cases). The number of hill fires in 2011 also increased by 516 to 1 335.

Last year, 93.14% of building fire calls were handled within the graded response time of six minutes, which was about 0.64% higher than our performance pledge of 92.5%.

In 2011, 23 persons lost their lives in fire incidents; 402 were injured and 5,482 rescued. In one noteworthy incident of No. 4 Alarm fire at the hawker stalls at Fa Yuen Street and the buildings in the vicinity on 30 November 2011, it was unfortunate that 9 lives were claimed and 34 persons, including 1 Fire Services member, were injured.

Last year, the total number of special service calls was 27,159, representing an increase of 1.1% (300 cases) as against 2010.

Apart from local rescue operations, the Department also provided support in overseas incidents. 8 members were sent to join the Support Team of the Security Bureau to Tokyo after the Fukushima incident in Japan on 11 March 2011 to assist Hong Kong residents stranded there to return to Hong Kong.

In 2011, first responders turned out to a total of 44,221 cases and assisted 32,599 patients/casualties. Among them, 28 who had appeared to have no breath or pulse were resuscitated.

## **Fire Protection** [Video](#)

The Department continued to further strengthen its work in fire safety to meet increasing public expectation.

As regards fire protection, we conducted a total of 263,750 inspections last year, representing an increase of 2.9% (7,626 inspections) as against 256,124 inspections in 2010. The inspections were conducted to ensure fire safety in relation to fire service installations (FSIs), means of escape, ventilation systems, handling of dangerous goods and licensed premises. A total of 40,615 inspections of licensed premises were carried out with 1,068 “Fire Hazard Abatement Notices” (FHANs) issued and 89 prosecutions instituted. Deeply concerned about the fire safety of old buildings, the Department launched a special inspection operation in districts with a high density of old buildings in mid-November. During the operation, 209 old composite buildings were inspected, 47 FHANs issued to residents/occupiers and leaflets distributed to the residents to promote fire safety.

There has been grave public concern about the repair and maintenance of FSIs. Last year, we conducted a total of 151,085 inspections on such installations, which were broadly comparable to 152,229 inspections in 2010. Last year, a total of 2,036 FHANs were issued and 25 prosecutions instituted.

From 2008 to 31 December 2011, a total of 1,626 Building Fire Safety Envoys were trained by the Department to monitor the fire safety of 875 buildings. The result is very encouraging. Participants included members from the District Fire Safety Committees, property management staff and owners and occupants of buildings. The Building Fire Safety Envoy Scheme has been extended from Wan Chai, Kowloon City, Yau Ma Tei, Tsim Sha Tsui, Mong Kok and Sha Tin to other densely populated districts, including Sham Shui Po, Wong Tai Sin and Kwun Tong by phase. Upon completion of the training, envoys can help disseminate fire safety messages, organise fire drills, inspect and report fire hazards or irregularities in their buildings and ensure that the FSIs of their buildings are properly checked every year.

We continued to promote fire protection through various activities, such as the Hillfire Prevention Publicity Campaign, as well as radio and television programmes to promote awareness of fire safety. For instance, “Fire Safety: A Message to Bring Home” was a programme broadcast on TV to promote the 2011 Fire Prevention Campaign, so as to enhance public awareness of fire safety.

The Department has collaborated with the Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) to produce a total of 52 episodes of a Fire Services radio programme, which has been broadcasting in “Happy Daily” on Fridays commencing 22 April 2011. The programme aims to enhance the knowledge of the public about our fire and ambulance services.

The Fire Safety Education Bus, which has been put into service since March 2011, toured around the territory for conducting education activities on fire evacuation and fire safety for the public and organisations. The Bus was particularly popular among primary and secondary schools, and was frequently invited to schools to educate students on fire safety. As at 31 December 2011, the Bus responded to 153 requests in total, with 16,138 participants in the education activities on fire evacuation and fire safety. The Department believes that fire safety education should start with children by cultivating proper attitudes towards fire prevention in them, hence bringing the fire safety messages to their families. To this end, the Department has launched the Fire Safety Education in kindergartens in Hong Kong since the beginning of this school year to organise fire safety education activities, introduce the work of fire services and disseminate knowledge on fire prevention to kindergarten students.

### **Ambulance Service** [Video](#)

In 2011, there were a total of 690,114 ambulance calls (687,133 calls in 2010), representing a daily average of 1,891 calls (1,882 calls in 2010) and a slight increase of 0.4% (2,981 calls) as against the total number of calls in 2010. As compared to the figure in 2009, there were 27,844 more calls in 2010, registering an increase of 4.2%.

On fulfilling the performance pledge, ambulance personnel arrived at the scene within the target response time of 12 minutes in 93.5% of all emergency calls in 2011.

For a more effective diversion of patients in major incidents, the Department introduced the Triage Mat, with which ambulance personnel can improve efficiency by handling the injured according to the severity of their injuries.

### [Triage Mat](#)

To remind the public not to misuse emergency ambulance service, we organise roving exhibitions in various districts and talks on ambulance aid knowledge in primary and secondary schools, with an aim to promoting the concept of using the ambulance service properly at community level. The Ambulance Service Campaign 2011 was again launched as a TV show on 2 July to deliver the message of “Do Not Misuse Emergency Ambulance Service” to about 0.8 million viewers.

As at the end of 2011, the Department replaced and replenished 257 ambulances (replacement: 211; replenishment: 46) as planned. The average age of the ambulance fleet was further lowered from 4.7 years at the end of 2009 to about 2.4 years at the end of 2011. Furthermore, 70 new ambulances will commence operation in 2012.

In addition, 3 Rapid Response Vehicles and 12 new-model Emergency Medical Assistant Motor

Cycles were put into service in 2011. The Department will also replace 2 Ambulance Land Rovers which are suitable for all road conditions.

[Rapid Response Vehicle](#)

[Emergency Medical Assistant Motor Cycle](#)

[Cross Country Ambulance](#)

The Department has launched the Heart Saver Scheme since 2007. With support from various sectors of the community, we have provided training on the use of public access defibrillators to staff of a number of organisations. As at the end of 2011, 5,766 persons who were qualified to use public access defibrillators were appointed as Heart Savers.

Analyses show that people tend to be panic-stricken in the event of an emergency and will forget how to handle the patients/injured. In view of this, the Department has provided simple post-dispatch advice to callers since 1 May last year for three types of emergency ambulance calls, namely bleeding, fracture or dislocation and burn with the aim of helping stabilise the conditions of patients/injured. As at 31 December, the Fire Services Communications Centre (FSCC) provided post-dispatch advice to 2,728 callers.

Subsequent to the implementation of the scheme, the Department conducted telephone survey of callers who had received post-dispatch advice. A majority of the 877 respondents recognised the support provided by the service.

**Key Items in 2011** [Video](#)

The Department keeps providing various kinds of training to personnel to further enhance their professional skills. A High Angle Rescue Team, specialised in handling complicated high angle rescue, was established on 12 August last year to cater for buildings which keep scaling new heights in Hong Kong.

With a view to providing a realistic training environment for rescue personnel to use and get themselves familiarised with specialised urban search and rescue skills under different circumstances, the Training Ground for Urban Search and Rescue Team (USAR) in Sheung Shui and USAR Tender were commissioned in September last year.

[USAR Training Ground](#)

Apart from providing continued and enhanced training, the Department endeavoured to upgrade its equipment. We keep on identifying the most advanced and appropriate tools and equipment as well as protective gear for our frontline personnel to ensure their efficiency and safety during

fire-fighting and rescue operations.

For example, commencing 1 April last year, the Department has put into use the PBI Matrix Structural Firefighting Protective Suit to provide protection for fire personnel. The Comprehensive Managed Care and Maintenance Service Centre designated for care and maintenance of this protective suit was put into service on the same day.

In case of major incidents, radio communications at scene are very busy. In view of this, the Department set up a Communications Support Team on 1 June last year to enhance operational efficiency and ensure the safety of frontline fire personnel at the fire scene.

Stable and reliable communication is essential to our operations. The Department has introduced a new digital trunked radio system for partial use and the new digital portable radios have been used by all frontline personnel in August last year. As we need time for a complete installation of the digital radio communication system, the analogue system and the new system are now operating simultaneously until the latter is fully commissioned at the end of this month.

To enhance the effectiveness of sharing fire protection information among various units, the Department has proceeded to take forward a computerised “Integrated Licensing, Fire Safety and Prosecution System” (LIFIPS) for handling applications relating to licensed premises. System testing of the LIFIPS has been carried out since June 2011 and the new system is expected to be put into operation by phase at the end of this month. With the implementation of the LIFIPS, integrated case-related data in respect of licensing, fire safety and prosecution will be transmitted by means of an electronic platform, through which units concerned can access the most up-to-date information of a particular case, thereby expediting the processing of application. The LIFIPS features a mobile working platform for FSD personnel to check case-related data and input data directly into their portable computers anytime during fieldwork, saving the time spent on repeated data entry. The LIFIPS can also process e-submission, thus providing the public with an additional means to submit application and enhancing effectiveness in processing applications.

Service members are required to handle incidents of various emergencies in the execution of their duties and they may suffer from emotional disturbance or psychological trauma as a consequence of these incidents. Therefore, the Department saw the need to offer effective and professional psychological support to our staff and appointed a clinical psychologist on 1 August 2011 to assist emotionally-disturbed staff members in facing up to adversity, strengthen the psychological knowledge among staff and enhance their psychological well-being and working adaptability.

Our efforts in providing quality service have been widely recognised by the community. In the Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme 2011, the Department won a total of six awards, including two Gold Awards, two Silver Awards, a Merit Award and a Special Citation. The

Department has again won the Gold Award for “Best Public Image Award” for the sixth time in a row. We are grateful to the public for their unfailing support. While we are glad that our efforts met with success, we will not become complacent about our accomplishments. Instead, we will continue to strive for excellence with professionalism in delivering better services to the public.

### **Plans in the Year Ahead [Video](#)**

In tandem with Hong Kong’s development, we need to evaluate the demand for fire and ambulance services from time to time. Among our initiatives, the existing Aberdeen Fire Station will be re-provisioned to Nam Fung Road as a fire station-cum-ambulance depot which will be completed in the middle of this year. Having regard to the commercial and residential developments in the vicinity of the Cruise Terminal at Kai Tak, the Department has planned to construct a fire station with ambulance facilities at Cheung Yip Street, Kowloon Bay in order to provide adequate emergency service coverage for the area. The Department has also planned to construct a fire station-cum-ambulance depot on the artificial island of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge to meet the emergency service demand upon the completion of the bridge.

In respect of staff recruitment, as at the end of 2011, we have recruited a total of 531 Fire and Ambulance personnel, including 38 Station Officers, 7 Ambulance Officers, 3 Station Officers (Control), 14 Senior Firemen / Firewomen (Control), 205 Firemen, 254 Ambulancemen and 10 Firemen (Workshop) to fill vacancies and meet service demand. We shall continue to conduct recruitment exercises to fill vacancies arising from natural wastage and newly-created posts in the coming financial year.

In 2012, in order to further enhance the quality of our services, the Department will continue to step up its fire safety education and publicity efforts, strengthen the live-fire training provided for Service members and reinforce their physical fitness. To this end, we endeavour to roll out the following initiatives in this year:

- (i) To reinforce the capabilities of our fire personnel in handling various types of hazardous materials (HazMat), the HazMat Team is expected to be set up in the first quarter of 2012.

### **[Equipment of HazMat Team](#)**

- (ii) The Department plans to procure a Mobile Live-fire Training Unit (MTU) to provide live-fire training for FS personnel, so as to strengthen their capabilities of coping with high temperature and heavy smoke. By virtue of its high flexibility, the MTU can be used at most fire stations for routine training. The MTU is expected to commence operation for training purpose at the end of 2012.

(iii) The Fire Services TV drama series produced in collaboration with the RTHK has been well received by all walks of life. Capitalising on the great success, the Department continues to work with RTHK in producing a sequel to the TV drama series to present viewers with real cases and to promote knowledge of fire and ambulance services. The sequel, comprising five one-hour episodes, will be broadcast commencing 25 February 2012.

(iv) To enable FS personnel to maintain their physical fitness to better cope with the requirement of various emergency rescue work, the Department has completed a report on the physical fitness required for staff members to discharge their duties and decided to refine the existing arrangement of the annual Physical Fitness Assessment (PFA) to ensure that the strength and endurance of FS personnel meet the physical requirements for discharging their duties. To meet operational needs, the new annual PFA standards recommended in the report will be gradually adopted commencing 2011/12 for full implementation.

#### [New Standard of Annual Physical Fitness Assessment](#)

We are just a week from the Lunar New Year. May I take this opportunity to wish you all a happy, healthy and prosperous Year of the Dragon. Thank you!

**Monday, January 16, 2012**

**End**