

2012 Year-end Review of the Fire Services Department

Following is the speech by the Director of Fire Services, Mr. CHAN Chor-kam, at the Department's 2012 Year-end Review today (5 February, 2013): -

Looking back on the previous year, with the concerted effort and dedication of all our staff members, the Department continued to provide the people of Hong Kong with highly efficient and quality services despite the many difficulties and challenges in the execution of our work. 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 2012 and will take this opportunity to introduce our new initiatives in the future.

Fire-fighting and Rescue Services (Video)

In 2012, there were a total of 37,638 fire calls, representing an increase of 10.1% (3,450 cases) as against 2011; the number of No. 3 or above Alarm fires was 13, which was lower than that in 2011 (19 cases).

Last year, 93.6% of building fire calls were handled within the graded response time, which was about 1.1% higher than our performance pledge of 92.5%.

In 2012, 14 persons lost their lives in fire incidents; 309 were injured and 6,002 rescued. One of the major incidents was a No. 4 Alarm fire at 5 Pan Hoi Street, Quarry Bay that occurred on the night of 14 November. The yard of the affected building was severely burnt and 40 flats suffered varying degrees of damage.

Last year, a total of 30,191 special service calls were received, representing an increase of 11.2% (3,032 cases) as against 2011. In one noteworthy incident of a serious collision of vessels off Shek Kok Tsui, northwest of Lamma Island at 8:23 p.m. on 1 October, 39 lives were claimed and 96 persons injured in the tragedy.

In 2012, first responders turned out to a total of 46,972 cases and assisted 34,438 patients/casualties. Among them, 34 who had appeared to have no breath or pulse were resuscitated.

Fire Protection (Video)

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

As regards fire protection, we conducted a total of 276,800 inspections in 2012, representing an increase of 4.9% (13,050 inspections) as against 263,750 inspections in 2011. The inspections were conducted to ensure fire safety in relation to fire service installations (FSIs), means of escape, ventilation systems, dangerous goods, licensed premises, etc. A total of 42,573 inspections of licensed premises were carried out with 1,044 “Fire Hazard Abatement Notices” (FHANs) issued and 59 prosecutions instituted.

There has been public concern about the repair and maintenance of FSIs. In 2012, we conducted a total of 161,072 inspections on such installations, representing an increase of 9,987 inspections as against 151,085 inspections in 2011. Last year, a total of 2,086 FHANs were issued and 11 prosecutions instituted.

From 2008 to 31 December 2012, a total of 2,753 Building Fire Safety Envoys were trained by the Department to monitor the fire safety of 1,483 buildings. The result is very encouraging. Participants included members from the District Fire Safety Committees, property management staff and owners and occupants of buildings. Upon completion of the training, Building Fire Safety 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.

Last year, we continued to organise various activities to promote fire prevention, including the TV show for the 2012 Fire Prevention Campaign to foster public awareness of fire safety and hill fire prevention.

In view of the encouraging results of the TV drama series *Elite Brigade*, which was jointly produced by the Department and Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) in 2010, the two Departments joined hands again last year to produce *Elite Brigade II*. The aim of the new drama series was to promote public awareness of fire protection and building fire safety management, public appreciation of the ambulance service and the need of patients, and the message of “Do Not Misuse Ambulance Service”. The series was highly acclaimed and well-received by the public.

In 2011, the Department collaborated with RTHK Radio 1 to produce a weekly half-hour radio programme in *Happy Daily*. This programme won the hearts of its audience. The two Departments collaborated again in May 2012 to produce a new 52-episode series to disseminate more information regarding fire and ambulance services to the community at large.

Thanks to the support from 209 frontline fire personnel who volunteered as Fire Safety Educators in the Fire Safety Education in Kindergartens Programme launched by the Department in 2011 across the territory, the Programme has been running smoothly. Moreover, the Programme was extended to cover all kindergartens using English as the primary medium of instruction since last September.

Ambulance Services (Video)

In 2012, there were a total of 727,300 ambulance calls (1,987 calls on average per day), registering an increase of 5.4% (37,186 calls) as against 690,114 calls in 2011. 683,921 of these calls were emergency calls, representing an increase of 5.7% as compared to 646,996 calls in 2011.

Ambulance personnel arrived at the scene within the target response time of 12 minutes in 93.2% of all emergency calls in 2012, which was 0.7% higher than our performance pledge of 92.5%.

To remind the public not to misuse the emergency ambulance service, we organised roving exhibitions in various districts and talks on ambulance aid knowledge in primary and secondary schools, with an aim to promoting the message of using the ambulance services properly at community level. The *Ambulance Elites' Caring Show 2012*, a TV programme produced under the Ambulance Service Campaign 2012, was broadcast on 23 September 2012 to deliver the message of "Do Not Misuse Emergency Ambulance Service" and "Give Way to Ambulances" to about 0.94 million viewers.

From 2009 to the end of 2012, the Department replaced and replenished 327 ambulances (replacement: 260; replenishment: 67) as planned. The average age of the ambulance fleet was 4.7 years at the end of 2009. The average age of the ambulance fleet was significantly reduced to about 2.15 years at the end of 2012. Furthermore, 54 new ambulances will commence operation in 2013.

To further enhance our standard of service and dissemination of messages in relation to ambulance services, one Paramedic Equipment Tender and one Ambulance Service Publicity Vehicle were put into service in September and December 2012 respectively.

Demonstration of Paramedic Equipment Tender ([Video](#))

Demonstration of Ambulance Service Publicity Vehicle ([Video](#))

The Department has launched the Heart Saver Scheme since 2006. With strong 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 2012, 7,330 persons who were qualified to use public access defibrillators were appointed as Heart Savers.

The Department has provided simple post-dispatch advice (PDA) for ambulance calls involving bleeding, fracture or dislocation of limbs and burn since 1 May 2011. To further enhance emergency ambulance services, PDA for convulsions and heat exposure was added to the advice since 1 June last year and PDA for hypothermia was also included since 1 January 2013. The PDA can provide patients with proper immediate treatment prior to the arrival of the ambulance crew and reduce the chance of deterioration in the condition of the patients.

Demonstration of Ambulance equipment - Patient Sliding Board ([Video](#))

Other Key Items in 2012 ([Video](#))

With technological advancement and rapid growth of the logistics industry, the use and conveyance of hazardous materials (HazMat) have become more frequent. To reinforce the capabilities of our fire personnel in handling various types of HazMat, the HazMat Team was set up on 1 March last year. HazMat Sub-teams were also formed at Sheung Wan, Sha Tin, Lai King and Tsim Sha Tsui Fire Stations.

Funding proposal for the construction of the new Fire Services Training School at Pak Shing Kok, Tseung Kwan O, was passed by the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council last year. The construction works commenced in August 2012 and is expected to be completed in October 2015. The new premises will be well-equipped to accommodate about 530 fire and ambulance trainees for residential training at the same time. As fire and ambulance personnel are required to work closely in handling emergencies, the new Training School can provide trainees with more opportunities to receive training together, thereby enhancing their coordination and ability in responding to disasters.

The new Aberdeen Fire Station-cum-Ambulance Depot at 1 Nam Fung Road was commissioned on 28 September 2012. The re-provisioned Aberdeen Fire Station has greatly improved the overcrowded conditions of the old station. With its new site at Nam Fung Road which is less subject to traffic congestion, the impacts on its emergency services can be reduced. We expect that the new facilities will not only improve operational efficiency, but also meet the increasing service demand in the district.

In respect of staff recruitment, as at the end of 2012, we have recruited a total of 375 Fire and Ambulance personnel, including 43 Station Officers, 18 Ambulance Officers, 8 Station Officers (Control), 156 Firemen and 150 Ambulancemen to fill vacancies and to meet service demand.

Plans for the Year Ahead (Video)

We evaluate the demand for fire and ambulance services from time to time to ensure that they are keeping up with the development of Hong Kong. Having regard to the commissioning of the first berth of the cruise terminal at Kai Tak in June 2013 and the commercial and residential developments in the vicinity, a fire station with ambulance facilities at Cheung Yip Street, Kowloon Bay is under construction for completion in June 2013 and the new station will 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. The construction of a new ambulance depot at Choi Shun Street, Sheung Shui has commenced as well. The new depot will enhance the performance of emergency ambulance services in the North District of the New Territories.

Regarding the reduction in the conditioned hours of work of the operational staff in the Fire Stream, the Department is planning to gradually launch the pilot phase of a trial scheme of the “New 51 Proposal”, which has garnered support from over half of the Service members, at suitable districts this year. During the trial period of the “New 51 Proposal”, the Department will ensure effective deployment of operational manpower so that neither the current level of service provided nor the safety of operational staff will be compromised in achieving the reduction of conditioned hours of work to 51 hours. If the trial scheme achieves satisfactory results at its pilot phase, the Department will consider full implementation of the scheme in due course.

We shall continue to conduct recruitment exercises to fill vacancies arising from natural wastage and newly-created posts in 2013.

In 2013, the Department will continue to further enhance the quality of services, step up its fire safety education and publicity efforts, strengthen the training of Service members and take their professionalism up a notch. We review the existing tools and equipment from time to time and actively look for products of a higher quality with a view to bringing in equipment that are more efficient, safer and of a higher standard.

Demonstration of equipment of High Angle Rescue Team ([Video](#))

Demonstration of Fire Investigation Dog ([Video](#))

Demonstration of New Mobile Command Unit ([Video](#))

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

Tuesday, February 5, 2013

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