

2014 Year-end Review speech by Director of Fire Services

Following is the speech by the Director of Fire Services, Mr Lai Man-hin, at the Fire Services Department (FSD)'s 2014 Year-end Review press conference today (January 22):

As we step into 2015, let me start by wishing you all a year of good health and success. 2014 marked the 146th anniversary of the establishment of the FSD. As the community continues to develop, the Department is facing increasing challenges. I would like to thank my colleagues sincerely for their unfailing efforts to uphold our long-standing commitment to protect the people of Hong Kong from fire and other calamities, as well as strive for continuous improvements in the services we provide to the community. Working with strong teamwork and determination, we have overcome many difficulties in fulfilling our mission. Last year, the Department accomplished a multitude of tasks in various areas including fire-fighting, rescue, fire protection and ambulance services. I am going to review the work and services of the Department in 2014 and will take the opportunity to outline the major initiatives in our future plan.

Fire-fighting and Rescue Services ([Video](#))

In 2014, there were a total of 36 335 fire calls, representing a decrease of 1.2 per cent (438 cases) as against 2013; the number of No. 3 or above alarm fires was six, which was lower than that of 2013 (11 cases).

Last year, 93.86 per cent of building fire calls were handled within the graded response time, which was about 1.36 per cent higher than our performance pledge of 92.5 per cent.

In 2014, 23 persons lost their lives in fire incidents, with 295 injured and 7 723 rescued. The serious cases among all were a No. 3 alarm fire taking place in Lau Fau Shan on June 1, another No. 3 alarm fire breaking out in Tin Shui Wai on August 30 and a No. 4 alarm fire at a recycling site in Yuen Long on November 30. In one most saddening incident, we lost Principal Fireman Leung Kwok-kei who sustained serious injuries in a gas explosion at Mei Ying House, Shek Kip Mei Estate on November 22 and finally passed away. We are all profoundly grieved at the loss of this brave comrade-in-arms. Fortunately, the other eight members injured in the incident have all been discharged from the hospital.

Last year, a total of 33 420 special service calls were received, representing an increase of 7.4 per cent (2 305 cases) as against 2013. Noteworthy incidents included a vessel collision in the waters around Cheung Chau on May 21 in which 35 persons were injured, and a lift falling case in Kwun Tong on October 8 which caused injuries to 29 persons.

In 2014, first responders attended to a total of 44 676 cases and provided service to 32 099 patients. Among them, 32 who had appeared to have no breath or pulse were resuscitated.

Fire Protection ([Video](#))

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

We conducted a total of 322 425 inspections in 2014, representing an increase of 11 per cent (32 331 inspections) as against 290 094 inspections in 2013. The inspections were conducted to ensure fire safety in relation to fire service installations (FSIs), means of escape, ventilation systems, dangerous goods and licensed premises. A total of 43 446 inspections of licensed premises were carried out with 1 013 “Fire Hazard Abatement Notices” (FHANs) issued and 189 prosecutions instituted.

There has been public concern about the repair and maintenance of FSIs. In 2014, we conducted a total of 184 047 inspections on such installations, issued 2 427 FHANs and instituted 19 prosecutions.

To enhance our efficiency and tactical effectiveness in handling complaints on fire hazards posing imminent danger, the Department set up a 24-hour standby Fire Protection Enforcement Team in May 2014 through internal deployment in the two Fire Protection Commands. Since its establishment on May 12, 2014, the team handled 787 complaints and conducted 916 inspections. Prosecutions were instituted against 190 complaints, accounting for 24 per cent of the total number of cases.

From 2008 to December 31, 2014, a total of 4 956 Building Fire Safety Envoys were trained by the Department to monitor the fire safety of 2 812 buildings. Participants of the scheme included property management staff, members of owners’ corporation or management committee members and owners and occupants of buildings. Upon completion of the Building Fire Safety Envoy Scheme training, they can help disseminate fire safety messages, organise fire drills, report fire hazards in their buildings and ensure that the FSIs of their buildings are properly inspected every year.

Last year, we continued to organise various promotional and educational activities on fire prevention to heighten public awareness, including the radio programme “Happy Daily” and putting up posters containing fire safety and ambulance information at MTR stations, tram and bus stops. In addition, the “HKFSD Mobile Application” was launched last year to promote fire safety to the public in a brand new way. We have also set up an official YouTube channel to raise publicity on the Internet.

Ambulance Services ([Video](#))

In 2014, there were a total of 747 437 ambulance calls (2 048 calls on average per day), registering an increase of 3.8 per cent (27 258 calls) as against 720 179 calls in 2013. 699 427 of these calls were emergency calls, representing an increase of 3.6 per cent as compared to 675 424 calls in 2013.

Ambulance personnel arrived at the scene within the target response time of 12 minutes in 94.4 per cent of all emergency calls in 2014, which was 1.9 per cent higher than our performance pledge of 92.5 per cent.

Besides its ongoing efforts to conduct publicity on ambulance service in communities and schools, the Department organised roving exhibitions by deploying the Ambulance Service Publicity Vehicle to various districts to educate members of the public and schoolchildren on the proper use of the ambulance service, and to deliver the message of proper use of ambulance resources.

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 2014, 7 445 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 service callers concerning six types of injuries/sickness since 2011. The service provides patients with proper immediate treatment prior to the arrival of the ambulance crew and reduces the risk of deterioration in their condition. In 2014, the Department provided PDA for 9 613 ambulance service callers. We have planned to develop a PDA computer system which will enable us to provide patients with more comprehensive and appropriate advice. This will help stabilise the conditions of patients, thus enhancing our emergency ambulance services. The implementation of the project is estimated to incur a non-recurrent cost of about \$38,000,000. We consulted the Legislative Council Panel on Security on July 8, 2014.

Members of the Panel generally supported the proposal and agreed that it should be submitted to the Finance Committee for funding approval. We plan to seek approval of the Finance Committee for the funding in the first quarter of this year. Subject to the funding approval, the system is expected to commission in November 2017 at the earliest.

Demonstration of Mobile Casualty Treatment Centre (MCTC) ([Video](#))

Demonstration of Ambulance equipment - Haemostatic Arterial Tourniquet (HAT) ([Video](#))

Demonstration of Ambulance equipment - Haemostatic Dressing (HD) ([Video](#))

Demonstration of Ambulance equipment - Winter Protective Jacket for Emergency Medical Assistant Motorcycle Riders ([Video](#))

Other Major Initiatives in 2014 ([Video](#))

Last year, we continued to strengthen our operation efficiency to cater for development of the community. Apart from introducing more advanced fire appliances and ambulances, we also planned to build new fire stations and ambulance depots. The construction works of a new ambulance depot at Choi Shun Street, Sheung Shui commenced in January 2013, and the project is expected to be completed in February this year. The ambulance depot will then be commissioned as soon as possible. Also, the Department has 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 completion of the bridge.

Since the construction works of the new Fire and Ambulance Services Academy at Pak Shing Kok, Tseung Kwan O commenced in 2012, the progress has been satisfactory, and the project is expected to be completed in the fourth quarter of this year. 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 will provide trainees with more opportunities to receive training together, thereby enhancing their ability to coordinate and respond to disasters.

In April 2013, the FSD and the Buildings Department launched a one-year joint operation to inspect the common means of escapes (MoEs) in 6 515 old-style domestic and composite buildings. The operation aimed to enhance fire safety of the common MoEs in these buildings. The FSD completed the inspection of the 6 515 target buildings in late March 2014. Currently, the inspection task force is following up the fire safety irregularities found in the joint inspection, which include fire hazards such as obstruction to MoEs by objects, illegal metal gates in stairways, damaged smoke stop doors, damage or lack of annual inspection of FSIs, etc. During the operation, the FSD personnel also distributed publicity leaflets to residents to promote their awareness of fire safety. In 2014, the inspection task

force issued a total of 2 763 FHANs and 1 427 warning letters, and instigated 2 direct prosecutions.

To keep in pace with the advancement of technology and the upgraded relevant international standards, the FSD planned in 2008 for the replacement of fire helmets and applied for Government funding in 2011, with a view to enhancing the protection for personnel at work. The relevant procurement procedures have been completed, and the fire helmets of Fire Services personnel will be fully replaced this year.

New Fire Helmet ([Video](#))

To tie in with the Government's target to increase public and private housing supply, 12 fire personnel have been recruited under the New Project Division of the Department since October 1, 2014 to cope with the increasing workload. The additional manpower will come on stream to help speed up the overall vetting process of building plans and enhance efficiency of the work.

The trial scheme in the Department for the reduction in the hours of work has entered its second year of full implementation since October 5, 2013. Thanks to the support and concerted efforts of Service members in the spirit of mutual understanding and compromise, the Scheme has achieved the expected results. As the trial scheme runs smoothly, the Department will seek approval of relevant bureaux for the reduction in the conditioned working hours of operational staff in the Fire Stream to 51 hours per week as soon as possible.

Plans for the Year Ahead ([Video](#))

In respect of human resources, we recruited a total of 379 Fire and Ambulance personnel, including 23 Station Officers, three Station Officers (Control), seven Senior Firemen (Control), 201 Firemen, 137 Ambulancemen, one Senior Fireman (Canteen Supervisor) and seven Firemen (Workshops) in 2014. We will continue to conduct recruitment exercises to fill vacancies arising from natural wastage in 2015.

In 2015, we will continue to step up our fire safety education and publicity efforts, strengthen the training of Service members and take their professional level up a notch. We will review the existing tools and equipment from time to time and will actively look for products of higher quality with a view to bringing in equipment that is more efficient, safer and of a higher standard.

Mini Fire Van ([Video](#))

Demonstration of equipment - Portable Light ([Video](#))

Demonstration of equipment - HazMatID Elite([Video](#))

Demonstration of equipment - Mobile Thermal Night Vision Camera ([Video](#))

That brings me to the end of my presentation of the 2014 Year-end Review.

Thank you!

Thursday, January 22, 2015

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