

## **2015 Year-end Review of the Fire Services Department Press Conference**

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Following is the speech by the Director of Fire Services, Mr Lai Man-hin, at the Fire Services Department (FSD)'s 2015 Year-end Review press conference today (February 18, 2016):

Good morning everyone. As we step into 2016, may I wish you all good health and success in your work. With the rapid development of our community, the Fire Services Department has been facing increasing challenges. I must extend my vote of thanks to all our staff who, undaunted by any challenges, continued to discharge their duties wholeheartedly in the previous year. They worked well together to fulfil their missions to protect the community and to provide top-notch services to members of the public on all fronts including firefighting, rescue, fire prevention and ambulance services, as well as mobilising and communications. I am going to review the work and services of the Department in 2015 and will take this opportunity to outline the major initiatives in our future plan.

### **Firefighting and Rescue Services [\(Video\)](#)**

In 2015, the Department received a total of 34,320 fire calls, representing a decrease of 5.5% (2,015 cases) as against 2014; the number of No. 3 or above alarm fires was 8, an increase of 2 cases as against the 6 cases in 2014.

Last year, there were a total of 29,904 building fire calls, representing a decrease of 6.7% (2,150 cases) as against 2014. 94.12% of these building fire calls were handled within the graded response time, which were about 1.62 percentage points higher than our performance pledge of 92.5%.

In 2015, 23 persons lost their lives in fire incidents (the same number of victims in 2014), with 320 injured and 9,254 rescued. The more serious cases among these incidents included a No. 3 alarm fire arising from a series of explosions in a vehicle repair workshop at Wan Fung Street, Wong Tai Sin in April, two No. 3 alarm fires that broke out at recycling storage sites in Wang Toi Shan and Tsat Sing Kong, Pat Heung respectively in September and a No. 3 vessel fire involving a number of boats at Shaukeiwan Typhoon Shelter in the same month.

Last year, a total of 33,683 special service calls were received, representing a slight increase of 0.8% (263 cases) as against 2014. More noteworthy incidents included a marine incident that involved a Hong Kong-Macau Turbojet ferry named “Horta” in October, a serious traffic accident at Tung Wui Road, Pat Heung in December and another accident that occurred in the waters off Tsing Sheung Road, Tsing Yi in the same month, in which a worker fell into a cargo hold of a barge. In this incident, 2 workers sustained injuries and 6 Service members including 1 Station Officer, 1 Principal Fireman and 4 Firemen were injured during the rescue operation.

In 2015, first responders attended to a total of 40,022 cases and provided service to 28,555 patients. Of them, 36 who had stopped breathing or had no pulse were resuscitated.

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

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

In 2015, we conducted a total of 370,614 inspections, representing an increase of 48,189 inspections or 15% as against 322,425 inspections in 2014. Fire service installations and equipment (FSIs), means of escape, ventilation systems, dangerous goods, licensed premises and so forth were inspected to ensure fire safety of buildings. A total of 38,348 inspections of licensed premises were carried out, resulting in 1,416 “Fire Hazard Abatement Notices” (FHANs) issued and 149 prosecutions instituted. After the explosion incident in a vehicle repair workshop at Wan Fung Street, Wong Tai Sin, the Department conducted a total of 4,653 inspections in more than 3,000 vehicle repair workshops throughout the territory, and instituted 11 prosecutions against over-storage of dangerous goods and 1 prosecution against the use of unapproved tanks for storing diesel oil.

Last year, we conducted a total of 202,748 inspections of building FSIs to ensure they are properly maintained, issued 2,906 FHANs and instituted 41 prosecutions.

In 2015, our inspection task force continued to follow up cases involving fire hazards subsequent to the fire safety inspections of 6,515 old-style domestic and composite buildings.

Such fire hazards included obstruction to means of escape, illegal installation of metal gates in stairways, damaged smoke stop doors, damage or lack of annual inspection of FSIs, etc. From January to December 2015, the inspection task force issued a total of 1,065 FHANs and 5,159 warning letters.

From 2008 till the end of 2015, a total of 6,028 Building Fire Safety Envoys were trained by the Department to monitor the fire safety of 3,610 buildings. Participants of the scheme included property management staff, members of owners' corporations or management committees, and owners and occupants of buildings. Upon completion of the training, the envoys 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 maintained every year.

In 2015, we continued to organise various publicity and educational activities on fire prevention to heighten public fire safety awareness. Apart from the radio programme Happy Daily's episodes on fire services and posters put up at MTR stations, and tram and bus stops to disseminate fire safety and ambulance information, the Department once again collaborated with Radio Television Hong Kong to produce an all-new 5-episode series of "Elite Brigade III" to convey fire safety and ambulance service messages to the public. The series was broadcast on television and the Internet and attracted around 4.5 million viewers in total.

### **Ambulance Services** [\(Video\)](#)

In 2015, there were a total of 757,901 ambulance calls, representing an increase of 1.4% (10,464 calls) as against 747,437 calls in 2014. 710,041 of them were emergency calls, representing an increase of 1.5% as compared to 699,427 calls in 2014.

Ambulance personnel arrived at the scene within the target response time of 12 minutes in 95% of all emergency calls in 2015, which was higher than our performance pledge of 92.5% by 2.5 percentage points.

In addition to its ongoing efforts to conduct publicity and education on ambulance services in local communities and schools, the Department organised roving exhibitions by deploying the

Ambulance Service Publicity Vehicle to various districts to educate members of the public on the proper use of ambulance services. The Department also organised different types of competitions with various themes for secondary, primary and kindergarten students to educate them on the proper use of ambulance resources.

Since its launch in 2007, the Heart Saver Scheme has received great support from various sectors of the community. As at the end of 2015, 7,785 persons who were qualified to use automated external defibrillators were appointed as Heart Savers. The Department also provides training on the use of automated external defibrillators to staff of various government departments. As at the end of 2015, 10,331 persons have completed the training.

The Department has provided simple post-dispatch advice (PDA) for ambulance service callers in respect of six types of injuries/sickness since 2011. The service provides patients with proper treatment prior to the arrival of the ambulance crew so as to reduce the risk of deterioration in their conditions. In 2015, the Department provided PDA for 8,327 ambulance service callers. The Department is now developing a PDA computer system which can assist operators of the Fire Services Communications Centre to obtain details of patients' conditions and relevant information systematically. The analysis of such data by the computer system will enable the operators to provide more comprehensive and appropriate advice to help stabilise the patients' conditions. With the funding earlier on approved by the Finance Committee, the Department has kick-started the project and the system is scheduled for operation in December 2017. The Department will seek to minimise the lead time for implementation of the project.

**Emergency Medical Assistant Motorcycle [\(Video\)](#)**

**Demonstration of Ambulance equipment – Tranexamic Acid and FR3 Semi-automated External Defibrillator [\(Video\)](#)**

**Other Major Initiatives in 2015 [\(Video\)](#)**

We endeavour to step up our operational efficiency to cater for development of the community. Apart from bringing in more advanced fire appliances and ambulances, we will develop plans for new fire stations and ambulance depots in a timely manner. Sheung Shui Ambulance Depot at No.1 Choi Shun Street, Sheung Shui commenced its operation on 6 April 2015.

The ambulance depot may significantly enhance the operational efficiency of emergency ambulance service in North New Territories and provide quality ambulance service to the residents. To cater for the development of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Hong Kong Boundary Crossing, the Department will construct a fire station-cum-ambulance depot at the Crossing. The facilities are scheduled for completion by the end of 2017. In addition, to tie with the development of Liantang/Heung Yuen Wai Boundary Control Point, the Department will construct a fire station with ambulance facilities at the Control Point. The facilities are scheduled for completion by the third quarter of 2018.

The construction works of the Fire and Ambulance Services Academy (FASA) commenced in 2012 and were completed last year. The associated facilities have commenced operation by phases. With an area of 158,000 square metres, FASA provides 526 residential training places for newly recruited and serving fire and ambulance personnel. Equipped with a wide range of advanced simulated training facilities, FASA can provide Service members with diversified training on the handling of incidents involving railway, tunnel, vessel, aircraft and fuel store, as well as specialised training on high angle rescue, urban search and rescue and compartment fire behavior, so as to strengthen their capacity in dealing with large-scale incidents. FASA also provides various teaching facilities, simulated training rooms and sports facilities. Upon commissioning of FASA, fire and ambulance personnel will be provided with more opportunities to be trained together, thereby enhancing their coordination and ability to respond to emergencies. The shared use of training facilities among trainees will achieve synergy and a more effective use of the training resources. The Opening Ceremony of FASA will be held on 16 March 2016. I will invite all media friends to revisit FASA when all its facilities are fully put into operation.

The Department will put in place a more specialised and institutionalised quality assurance mechanism to set out clear and consistent service quality standards and inspection criteria. Meanwhile, we will establish a forward-looking training accreditation mechanism to accredit the qualifications and professional standards of fire personnel. To this end, a permanent Deputy Chief Fire Officer post has been created since November 2015. The post holder, taking up the post as the Commandant of FASA, is responsible for planning and monitoring the development and implementation of the quality assurance and accreditation mechanisms of the fire stream as well as monitoring the existing quality assurance system for the ambulance stream.

The Department has fully implemented the trial scheme for reducing the conditioned working hours at all operational units in the fire stream by phases for more than two years since October 2013. Good progress has been made since the implementation of the scheme. As shown by the data on various aspects, the scheme has been able to meet the three pre-requisites, i.e. cost-neutrality, non-additional manpower and maintaining the same level of service to the public. The Department has formally submitted its proposal to the relevant policy bureaux, hoping that the approval for reducing the conditioned working hours of operational personnel in the fire stream to 51 hours per week will be granted at an earlier date.

To more effectively combat illegal transfer of fuel, the Department set up the Anti-illicit Fuelling Activities Task Force (“Task Force”) in January 2015. The Task Force is mainly responsible for gathering intelligence and conducting inspections on activities relating to illicit transfer of fuel. A total of 98 surprise inspections were made and 203 complaints handled in 2015. The Task Force has also conducted 1,128 inspections and instituted prosecution in 120 cases. Over 100,000 litres of illicit fuel were seized in total.

To cater for the future railway development of Hong Kong and the needs for emergency services that may arise, the Department acquired equipment such as “Rail-Road Fire Appliance” and “Closed-circuit Breathing Apparatus” with the funding sought in 2013. Such equipment can assist frontline personnel in their firefighting and rescue operations in railway conduits and tunnels. Since Trimix and saturation-mode techniques have first been adopted for the tunnel boring works of the Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Link Project, the Department set up a Special Rescue Team last year and arranged for frontline personnel to receive overseas training on how to operate a special underwater breathing apparatus when handling any accidents or emergency at such pressurized sites. The Department also acquired “Rescue Jet Bikes” with high mobility and high level of safety to strengthen our marine rescue capability and in particular our rescue and search capabilities in shallow water areas like sandy beach and rocky beach. These new fire appliances and equipment are now displayed at the training venues, our staff there will be pleased to tell you more about these items.

**Rail-Road Fire Appliance** ([Video](#))

**Closed-circuit Breathing Apparatus** ([Video](#))

**Special Rescue Team** ([Video](#))

**Closed-circuit Rebreather (For Special Rescue Team use) [\(Video\)](#)**

**Rescue Jet Bike [\(Video\)](#)**

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

On human resources, we recruited a total of 476 Fire and Ambulance personnel in 2015, including 73 staff at officer rank and 403 rank and file staff. It is estimated that 580 Fire and Ambulance personnel will be recruited to fill vacancies in 2016, including 101 staff at officer rank and 479 rank and file staff.

In 2016, we will continue to step up our efforts on the fire safety education and publicity fronts to enhance public awareness of fire protection. To take Service members' professional level up a notch, we will actively implement the quality assurance and training accreditation mechanisms and strengthen the training of our members in all areas through various training facilities at FASA. In regard to the implementation of "Registered Fire Engineer Scheme", we will step up planning for the drafting and amendment of the relevant legislation and subsidiary legislation so that they can be submitted to the Legislative Council for deliberation this year. We will also review the existing tools and equipment from time to time and will actively look for more appropriate products with a view to bringing in equipment that is more efficient, safer and of a higher standard for the frontline personnel.

**"Learn How to Escape" Experience Facility [\(Video\)](#)**

**Argus Mi-TIC S Thermal Imaging Camera and Portable Smoke Blocker [\(Video\)](#)**

This concludes my review of our work in 2015. Thank you!

**Thursday, February 18, 2016**

**End**