

## **2016 Year-end Review of the Fire Services Department**

### **Press Conference**

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Following is the speech (translated from Chinese) by the Director of Fire Services, Mr Li Kin-yat, at the Fire Services Department (FSD) 2016 Year-end Review press conference today (January 23):

Good afternoon everyone. At the dawn of 2017, may I wish you all good health and success in your work. Amidst rapid development of our community, the Fire Services Department has been facing increasing challenges. Thanks to all my colleagues who remain united and steadfast in discharging their duties to fulfil the missions to protect the community, the department has lived up to the high expectations of the public. We provide top-notch services to the people of Hong Kong 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 2016 and will take this opportunity to outline the major initiatives in our future plan.

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

In 2016, the department received a total of 38 112 fire calls, representing an increase of 11 per cent as against 2015; the number of No. 3 or above alarm fires was nine, an increase of one case as against the eight cases in 2015.

Last year, there were a total of 34 148 building fire calls, representing an increase of 14.2 per cent as against 2015. Among these building fire calls, 94.03 per cent were handled within the graded response time, which was about 1.53 percentage points higher than our performance pledge of 92.5 per cent.

In 2016, 24 persons lost their lives in fire incidents, with 290 injured and 9 196 rescued. The more serious cases among these incidents included a number of No. 1 alarm fires during the disturbance in Mong Kok at the Lunar New Year; a No. 4 alarm fire at mini-storages in the Amoycan Industrial Centre, Ngau Tau Kok Road, in June; a No. 3 alarm fire at Cheong Fat Factory Building in Cheung Sha Wai in July; a No. 3 alarm fire at Yau Ma Tei Fruit Market in September; and a No. 2 alarm fire at Cha Kwo Ling Tsuen in December. The difficult firefighting and rescue operation in the Amoycan Industrial Centre lasted for more than four days, in which a number of fire personnel were injured, and we lost two committed and fearless firefighters. We were all profoundly grieved at the loss of the brave comrades-in-arms, Senior Station Officer Mr Thomas Cheung and Senior Fireman Mr Hui Chi-kit. We are most grateful for the tremendous support and warm regards from the general public, whose encouragement has helped steer us through the trying time. We assure you that we are committed to our mission and will endeavour to protect life and property. We shall never forget the selflessness, fearlessness and gallantry of our two colleagues who gave their lives in the course of duty.

On the special service call front, a total of 36 593 calls were received, representing an increase of 8.6 per cent as against 2015. There were some high-profile incidents, including a frost incident in Tai Mo Shan in January, where multiple hikers were stranded; a roof structure collapse at the City University of Hong Kong sports hall in May; and a leakage of chemical waste of suspected hydrogen peroxide at the Tai Po Industrial Estate in December. For the rescue operation in Tai Mo Shan, the department deployed more than 300 fire and ambulance personnel. Owing to the extreme cold and the icy slippery road surface, the rescuers had to walk two to three miles before reaching the incident spot for rescue operation. During the operation, a total of 129 people were taken to places of safety, and among them 67 persons were sent to the hospital for medical treatment. Regarding the collapse incident at the City University of Hong Kong sports hall, the department deployed 85 fire and ambulance personnel for the rescue operation.

In 2016, first responders attended to a total of 41 863 cases and provided service to 28 671 patients. Of them, 41 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 2016, we conducted a total of 373 266 fire safety inspections on fire service installations and equipment (FSIs), means of escape and ventilation systems in buildings; storage quantity of dangerous goods; licensed premises; and so forth, representing an increase of 2 652 inspections or 0.7 per cent as against 370 614 inspections in 2015. A total of 40 122 inspections of licensed premises were carried out, resulting in 1 509 Fire Hazard Abatement Notices (FHANs) issued and 115 prosecutions instituted.

In the wake of the mini-storage fire at the Amoycan Industrial Centre, a total of 885 mini-storages were identified by government departments, namely the FSD, the Buildings Department, the Lands Department and the Labour Department, through various means, including Internet research, on-site inspections and the territory-wide survey on industrial buildings conducted by the department at the end of November last year. During the inspections, the department identified the following fire hazards which were commonly found in mini-storages:

- (i) Unsatisfactory locking devices on emergency exits or even locked exits in units;
- (ii) Insufficient provision of exit signs and directional signs;
- (iii) Insufficient coverage of hose reel systems;
- (iv) Insufficient provision or obstruction of windows; and
- (v) Undesirable arrangement and layout of mini-storage cubicles.

As at December 31 last year, 1 380 FHANs had been issued to 275 of the mini-storages with fire hazards. FHANs will be issued to operators of the remaining mini-storages with irregularities identified in due course. The department will closely examine each case and carry out inspections and enforcement actions in collaboration with other government departments in accordance with the relevant ordinances.

Last year, we conducted 204 610 inspections of building FSIs to ensure their proper maintenance, issued a total of 2 561 FHANs and instituted 38 prosecutions.

In 2016, the department continued to follow up on cases involving fire hazards subsequent to the fire safety inspections of 6 515 old-style composite and domestic buildings. Such fire hazards included obstruction to means of escape, illegal installation of metal gates in stairways, damaged smoke stop doors, defective FSIs or lack of annual inspection of FSIs, etc. A total of 691 FHANs were issued during the year.

The department understands that owing to structural or spatial constraints, some owners might encounter difficulties in upgrading the fire safety standard of old-style composite buildings, in particular the installation of the hose reel system. To tackle this, the department launched a "pilot scheme on improvised hose reel system" last year. With the support and co-operation of the Water Supplies Department (WSD), five three-storey target buildings joined the pilot scheme, under which they were allowed to install improvised hose reel systems with direct water supply from the government mains (direct-feed type), dispensing with the requirement to set up relevant installations such as water tanks and fire pumps. In view of the successful implementation and satisfactory result of the pilot scheme, the department has decided to extend the scheme to other suitable old-style composite buildings of three storeys or below so that owners or occupiers can install the relevant system as soon as possible and enhance the fire safety of the buildings in a timely manner. In addition, taking into account the response time of building fire calls and past experience in enforcing the Fire Safety (Buildings) Ordinance, the department has decided to lower the capacity requirement of the water tanks

for fire hose reel systems for most four- to six-storey composite buildings from 2 000 litres to 500 to 1 500 litres. Rooftops of the majority of the old buildings can bear the weight of the water tanks structurally, and it is estimated that over 3 000 buildings will be benefited. In the case of composite buildings of seven storeys or above, the department is now working with the WSD to actively study the source of water supply to the water tanks. With the safety of potable water in mind, we hope to relax the requirements on the installation of separate fresh water systems and water supply systems for fire service purposes, thus forgoing the need to re-connect underground delivery pipes and install additional water supply pipes and up-feed pumps; this will streamline work procedures and reduce cost while enhancing fire safety standards of more buildings.

From 2008 till the end of 2016, a total of 7 159 Building Fire Safety Envoys were trained by the department to monitor the fire safety of 4 336 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.

As for the control of dangerous goods, the department set up the Anti-illicit Fuelling Activities Task Force in January 2015. In 2016, the Task Force carried out a total of 1 212 inspections and 94 surprise inspections, and handled 225 complaints, while seizing a total of over 500 000 litres of illicit fuel and instituting prosecution in 91 cases. To eradicate such illegal activities, the department will continue to gather intelligence and conduct inspections on activities relating to illicit transfer of fuel.

In 2016, we continued to organise various publicity and educational activities on fire prevention to heighten public fire safety awareness through various media channels. Apart from the radio programme Happy Daily's episodes on fire services, the department has launched the "Hong Kong Fire Services Department Mobile Application" to promote fire

safety and ambulance services, enabling members of the public to gain access to relevant information anytime and anywhere. We also understand that fire safety education should start at an early age. To this end, the Fire Safety Education in Kindergarten Programme was launched in 2011 with around 650 enthusiastic fire personnel carrying out fire safety education activities voluntarily in kindergartens during their off-duty hours. By the end of 2016, we had held over 3 600 fire safety education talks in kindergartens and provided fire safety education to over 220 000 children.

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

In 2016, there were a total of 773 322 ambulance calls, representing an increase of 2 per cent (15 421 calls) as against 757 901 calls in 2015. Of them, 726 286 were emergency calls, representing an increase of 2.3 per cent as compared to 710 041 calls in 2015.

To cope with the growing number of emergency ambulance calls and the operational need, the department successfully increased the daily number of ambulances available for mobilisation by way of analysing the deployment data and flexibly deploying resources last year. Since mid-2016, the department has added two ambulances in each day shift and one ambulance in each night shift, while adopting a new measure under which ambulances for shorter day shift are put into service to cope with the demands at different periods in a flexible manner. We set up two special support units in 2014, and have piloted the third unit since last year. In addition to special duties in major incidents or large-scale public events, members of the unit also provide standby service during daily peak periods when manpower is in greater demand so as to enhance the operational efficiency of the emergency ambulance services.

On the publicity and education front, the department organised roving exhibitions by deploying the Ambulance Service Education Vehicle to various districts to educate members of the public on the proper use of ambulance services, in addition to its ongoing efforts to conduct publicity and education on ambulance services in local communities and schools.

Moreover, the department has continued to provide cardiopulmonary resuscitation training to the general public. Since its launch in 2007, the Heart Saver Scheme has received great support from various sectors of the community. As at the end of 2016, 8 034 persons qualified to use automated external defibrillators have been 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 2016, 11 388 persons had completed the training. We will make continued efforts to promote the School Outreach Scheme and visit schools to organise talks for students and teachers, and this will be coupled with visits by ambulances and the Ambulance Service Education Vehicle to schools, in the hope of fostering students' understanding on the ambulance services by the department and instilling in them the message of the proper use of ambulance services. Last year, we organised a total of 115 School Outreach Talks which were well attended by around 19 000 teachers and students.

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 2016, the department provided PDA for 5 945 ambulance service callers. The department is actively developing a PDA computer system which can assist operators of the Fire Services Communications Centre to provide advice more accurately. The department is now expediting the necessary preparation work as far as possible in the hope that the system can be put into service at the end of this year.

**Intraosseous Device & Pressure Infusor** [\(Video\)](#)

**Bariatric Stretcher** [\(Video\)](#)

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

**Other Major Initiatives in 2016** [\(Video\)](#)

The department endeavours to enhance our operational efficiency in alignment with the

development of the community. To cater for the development of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Hong Kong Boundary Crossing Facilities, the department will construct a fire station-cum-ambulance depot at the crossing. The facility is scheduled for completion by the end of this year. In addition, to tie in with the development of the Liantang/Heung Yuen Wai Boundary Control Point, the department will construct a fire station with ambulance facilities at the control point. The facility is scheduled for completion by the third quarter of 2018.

In respect of human resources management, the department has started to reduce the weekly conditioned working hours of operational personnel in the fire stream in phases on a trial basis since mid-March 2013. The results proved to be favourable during the three-year trial period, and thus we have been granted approval to reduce the weekly conditioned working hours to 51 hours officially commencing from July 18 last year. The department will continue to monitor various performance indicators and will submit a report to the relevant policy bureaux again this August to confirm whether the three pre-requisites, i.e. cost-neutrality, non-additional manpower and maintaining the same level of service to the public, have still been met since the official reduction of the working hours.

Last year, the department arranged for several service members to receive overseas training on mountain rescue and a support team for mountain rescue operations was set up on October 7 to improve the skills of our members to cope with the increasingly complicated mountain rescue operations. The team will assist incident commanders to carry out search and rescue operations. In addition, a review committee on rescue operation strategies in extreme weather was formed last year to review the operation strategies and procurement of the required equipment for major incidents caused by such weather. After review, we have procured the required equipment for selected fire stations, ambulance depots and front-line fire appliances and ambulances.

The department attaches great importance to the actual needs of front-line members in



firefighting and rescue operations. In the event of No. 3 or above alarm fires or very hot weather and long working hours, the incident commanders may request the Fire Services Communications Centre to arrange to set up rest areas near the incident scenes for front-line members to take some rest and restore energy after working for a period of time. Apart from the provision of beverages and other replenishments, the rest areas will also be equipped with relevant facilities such as mobile tents and cooling mist fans. We will continue to optimise the arrangements for rest areas to step up the logistical support for front-line members and better safeguard their health to maintain the efficiency of firefighting and rescue operations.

The Fire and Ambulance Services Academy (FASA) held its first open day on April 10 last year. Due to an overwhelming response, it reopened to the public on May 8, attracting about 30 000 visitors. The open days, being one of the highlight events of the "Appreciate Hong Kong" Campaign of the Government, featured fire appliance and ambulance parades, firefighting and rescue demonstrations, etc, which allowed the general public to learn more about the actual training and work of our service members.

**Mountain Search and Rescue Equipment [\(Video\)](#)**

**Optimization of Rest Area [\(Video\)](#)**

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

On human resources, we recruited a total of 633 fire and ambulance personnel in 2016, including 107 staff at officer rank and 526 rank and file staff. It is estimated that some 540 fire and ambulance personnel will be recruited to fill vacancies in 2017, including 91 staff at officer rank and 449 rank and file staff.

The Third Generation Mobilising System (the System) currently in use has been operating for more than 10 years and will reach its serviceable life in 2022. With the rising number of emergency calls, the increasingly complicated nature of emergency services and the need to

enhance service quality, it is necessary to review the mobilising procedures from time to time. In light of this, the department commissioned a consultant company in 2014 to study the enhancement or replacement of the System. The study aims to find out whether the current system capacity is sufficient to cope with the demand in the future, how to apply the state-of-the-art technology to the mobilising system, how to better enhance the system operational reliability, etc.

Depending on the study result, we plan to consult the Legislative Council Panel on Security in the first quarter of this year on the replacement of the System.

In 2017, we will continue to step up our efforts on the fire safety education and publicity fronts to enhance public awareness of fire protection. On the training front, we have implemented a Specialised Training Enhancement Scheme and appointed suitable FSD personnel as Specialist Tutors for 16 types of specialised training to enhance the specialised training standard of the FASA. In order to ensure the operational efficiency and professional level of our members, we will actively implement the quality assurance mechanism for the fire stream personnel and strengthen the training of our members in all areas with the help of the sophisticated training facilities at the FASA. 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 tools and equipment that are safer, more sophisticated and efficient for the front-line fire and ambulance personnel.

The department also endeavours to cater for members' need for accommodation. To address the shortage of quarters, we are now actively studying the construction of departmental quarters atop newly built fire stations and ambulance depots or in the adjacent areas, including the provision of rank and file quarters for disciplined services in Area 106 at Pak Shing Kok in Tseung Kwan O near the FASA and atop the reprovisioned Chai Wan Ambulance Station at the junction of Sun Yip Street and Siu Sai Wan Road, Chai Wan. We hope that the completion of these quarter units can help shorten the waiting time for quarters

and hence reduce members' pressure on accommodation.

In regard to the implementation of Registered Fire Engineer Scheme, we will step up preparation for the amendment and drafting of the relevant legislation and subsidiary legislation. To enhance the fire safety of mini-storages and old-style industrial buildings, the department will proactively study the relevant legislative exercise to improve the overall fire safety standard.

**New Road Traffic Accident Equipment [\(Video\)](#)**

**Unmanned Aircraft System [\(Video\)](#)**

Last but not least, on behalf of my colleagues, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the general public for their support and encouragement in the past year. We will remain steadfast in discharging our duties to safeguard Hong Kong our home and make Hong Kong a better place to live and work. This concludes the review of our work in 2016. The Lunar New Year will arrive in less than a week's time. May I wish our media friends in advance a happy Year of the Rooster and good health.

Thank you.

**END**

**Monday, January 23, 2017**