

2017 Year-end Review of the Fire Services Department

Press Conference

Following is the speech (translated from Chinese) by the Director of Fire Services, Mr Li Kin-yat, at the Fire Services Department 2017 Year-end Review press conference today (February 6):

Good afternoon, everyone. As 2018 begins, my management team and I would like to wish you all good health and every success.

2017 marked a challenging year for the Fire Services Department. Thanks to my colleagues, who stay united and steadfast in performing their duties, we have lived up to the public's expectations by overcoming one hurdle after another. Over the past year, we have continued to fulfil our mission of "Serving with courage, passion and commitment". We have strived to provide the community with top-notch services on all fronts, including firefighting, rescue, fire prevention, ambulance service, and mobilising and communications. I am going to review the work of the department in 2017 and shall take this opportunity to outline the major initiatives in our future plan.

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

In 2017, the department received a total of 33 934 fire calls, representing a decrease of 11 per cent as against 2016. The number of No. 3 or above alarm fires was three, a decrease of six cases as against the nine cases in 2016.

Last year, there were a total of 29 329 building fire calls, representing a decrease of 14.1 per cent as against 2016. Among these building fire calls, 94.3 per cent were handled within the graded response time, which was about 1.8 percentage points higher than our performance

pledge of 92.5 per cent.

In 2017, 21 persons lost their lives in fire incidents (24 victims in 2016), with 335 injured and 9 231 rescued. Among the more notable cases were an arson case in MTR Tsim Sha Tsui Station in February, two No. 3 alarm fires at a temporary warehouse and a recyclable storage site in Hung Shui Kiu and Shan Ha Tsuen in Yuen Long in May and September respectively, and a No. 3 alarm fire at a factory building in San Po Kong in November.

On the special service call front, a total of 36 326 calls were received, representing a decrease of 0.7 per cent as against 2016. Among the more notable cases were an incident in Tiu Shau Ngam, Ma On Shan, in March, in which two hikers lost their way and were stranded; a series of major incidents caused by flooding and strong wind brought about by super typhoon Hato and severe tropical storm Pakhar, which struck Hong Kong in succession in August; and a traffic accident in which a double-decker bus crashed into a building at the junction of Cheung Sha Wan Road and Yen Chow Street in Kowloon in September, resulting in multiple casualties. The more than 20-hour mountain search-and-rescue operation at Tiu Shau Ngam, Ma On Shan, proved to be particularly strenuous and difficult, and we lost our fearless and gallant Principal Fireman Yau Siu-ming in the operation. We are all profoundly grieved at the loss of such a devoted and selfless comrade-in-arms. While deeply saddened by his passing, we are most grateful for the great tribute paid by the general public to Principal Fireman Yau's sacrifice as well as their warm regards to his family. We are determined to carry on his selfless legacy, continue to commit to our mission and endeavour to protect life and property.

In 2017, first responders attended to a total of 40 298 cases and provided service to 27 678 patients. Of them, 36 who had stopped breathing or had no pulse were resuscitated.

Fire Protection ([Video](#))

Social progress has raised people's expectations on fire safety. To meet public demand,

members of the department are committed to making continuous efforts on all fronts, including licensing, law enforcement, fire prevention and fire safety, to eliminate potential fire hazards.

In 2017, the department conducted a total of 399 373 fire safety inspections on, among others, fire service installations and equipment (FSIs), means of escape and ventilation systems in buildings; storage quantity of dangerous goods; and licensed premises, representing an increase of 26 107 inspections or 7 per cent as against 373 266 inspections in 2016. Among them, 39 789 inspections of licensed premises were carried out, resulting in 1 390 Fire Hazard Abatement Notices (FHANs) issued and 144 prosecutions instituted.

In the wake of the mini-storage fire at Amoycan Industrial Centre in 2016, the department has inspected 901 mini-storage facilities in 295 buildings. As at December 31, 2017, a total of 7 663 FHANs were issued against irregularities found in 799 mini-storage facilities. Among them, 505 FHANs have been complied with, and 11 mini-storage centres have completed the fire safety improvement works. As regards prosecution, as at the end of last year, the operators of three mini-storage centres were convicted and fined for failing to comply with the requirements of the department to abate fire hazards within a specified period. One of the mini-storage centres was ordered by the court to abate the fire hazards within a specified period. The department and other relevant departments met on various occasions with representatives of the trade and individuals who have received FHANs or statutory orders, and explained to them the fire hazards found in the mini-storage facilities and the necessary follow-up actions to be taken. The department notices that the operators of the mini-storage facilities concerned are now taking positive actions to comply with the requirements, such as hiring authorised persons to plan and carry out fire safety improvement works. The department will continue to closely monitor the situation and institute prosecutions against operators who have not taken proactive follow-up actions in compliance with the requirements set out in the FHANs.

In response to heightened public concerns about fire safety subsequent to the mini-storage fire at the Amoycan Industrial Centre, we have conducted proactive inspections of industrial buildings across the territory in 2017. In light of the potential fire risks of old-style industrial buildings, we believe that it is necessary to enhance the fire safety standard of these buildings. We are currently preparing a new piece of legislation to make it mandatory for pre-1987 industrial buildings to install specific FSIs, such as an automatic sprinkler system, emergency lighting, a fire hydrant and hose reel system and a fire alarm system. The buildings should also comply with the requirements of the Buildings Department, including, among others, the provision of adequate means of escape, means of access for firefighting and rescue, and fire-resisting construction.

Last year, we conducted a total of 220 277 inspections of building FSIs to ensure their proper maintenance, issued 2 566 FHANs and instituted 69 prosecutions.

Earlier on, we launched the Pilot Scheme on Improvised Hose Reel System (Direct-feed Type) for old-style composite buildings of three storeys or below, dispensing with the requirement to set up installations such as fire service water tanks and pumps. With the active support of the Water Supplies Department, we also implemented the Improvised Hose Reel System Scheme (Phase Two) for old-style composite buildings of four to six storeys or not more than 20 metres in height with a view to further assisting relevant individuals in complying with the fire safety improvement requirements without compromising basic fire safety. Last year, we launched the Improvised Fire Hydrant And Hose Reel System Scheme (Phase Three) for old-style composite buildings of seven storeys or above or over 20 metres in height, allowing building owners to use water supply from the existing fresh water roof tank or that from the upfeed water pipe of the fresh water supply system for fire service purposes in a flexible manner. The three-phase scheme can help building owners solve the technical difficulties they had encountered and bring the fire safety of these buildings to a higher standard.

As for the promotion of fire safety education, the department has continued to reach out to the

community through the Fire Safety Ambassador Scheme and the Building Fire Safety Envoy Scheme in a bid to further promote fire protection messages and to enhance the monitoring of building fire safety. By the end of last year, the number of Fire Safety Ambassadors reached 160 023. Various activities have been organised in collaboration with Fire Safety Ambassadors from each of the 18 districts across the territory to disseminate fire protection messages, and remarkable results have been achieved. Building Fire Safety Envoys, reaching 8 205 in number, are mainly property management staff, members of owners' corporations or management committees, and owners and occupants of relevant buildings. Upon completion of relevant training, the envoys can help promote fire safety messages, organise fire drills and report fire hazards in their respective buildings, and help ensure that building FSIs are properly maintained every year.

Apart from the aforesaid schemes, we have continued to join hands with other government departments and District Fire Safety Committees in co-organising various publicity activities on fire safety with schools, property management companies and district organisations. A range of activities including talks, seminars and exhibitions on fire safety as well as fire drills have been conducted to enhance the overall awareness of fire safety in the community. The department has also set up dedicated webpages to provide the public with different types of fire protection messages, information on the use of FSIs, safety hints on emergency incidents and mountain activities, and more. Last year, the department once again entered into co-operation with Radio Television Hong Kong to carry out preparatory work for a drama, "Elite Brigade IV", in a bid to disseminate messages on fire safety and ambulance service to the public. The filming for the drama is in progress, and it is scheduled to go on air in October this year.

Regarding the control of dangerous goods, our Anti-illicit Fuelling Activities Task Force carried out a total of 1 256 inspections and 122 surprise inspections, and handled 180 complaints, while seizing a total of over 490 000 litres of illicit fuel and instituting prosecution in 103 cases in 2017. To eradicate such illegal activities, the department will

continue to gather intelligence and conduct inspections on activities relating to illicit transfer of fuel. In addition, we have set up a Dangerous Goods Enforcement Team dedicated to the combat of illegal activities relating to dangerous goods. The team conducts inspections at premises including vehicle repair workshops and Lunar New Year Fairs, with a view to ensuring their compliance with the requirements under the Dangerous Goods Ordinance.

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

In 2017, there were a total of 786 310 ambulance calls, representing an increase of 1.7 per cent (or 12 988 calls) as against 773 322 calls in 2016. Of them, 734 310 were emergency calls, representing an increase of 1.1 per cent as against 726 286 calls in 2016.

To meet the growing demand for emergency ambulance service, we have continually increased front-line ambulance resources and paramedic training manpower for further enhancement of the operational efficiency of the ambulance personnel and their capability to respond, while at the same time providing them with more adequate support. Last year the department successfully increased the daily number of ambulances available for mobilisation by way of enhancing the analysis of the deployment data and flexibly deploying resources. Apart from increasing the number of ambulances in each day shift and night shift, the department has continued to deploy more ambulances on short day shifts since mid-2017 so as to cope with the demand for ambulance service at different periods of time. In addition, the department set up the fourth special support unit in 2017. Members of the unit are tasked to perform special duties during major incidents or large-scale public events and provide standby service during daily peak periods when manpower is in greater demand in order to enhance the operational efficiency of the emergency ambulance service and facilitate flexible strategic arrangements according to operational or service needs.

On the publicity and education front, we have taken further forward the community education programme to foster the public's knowledge on cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and

automatic external defibrillation, and to enhance relevant training with a view to increasing the survival rate of patients suffering from cardiac arrest. Besides implementing the Heart Saver Scheme and providing Automatic External Defibrillator (AED) training to equip more members of the public with CPR skills and to teach them how to use AEDs, we also launched the Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation Training Programme in Campus in April 2017 to extend such training to students and teachers. By the end of last year, we had delivered a total of 67 training courses with participation of 3 407 students and teachers. In August 2017, we launched the "Press to shock - Save a life" Public Access Defibrillation course, a programme designed to strengthen Hong Kong people's knowledge on AEDs. As at the end of last year, we have organised a total of 18 courses with participation of 463 members of the public.

Other Major Initiatives [\(Video\)](#)

To keep pace with social development, the department reviews from time to time the demand for fire and ambulance services in various districts across the territory, and takes into account factors such as fire risks and the transport network in individual districts in its planning of new fire stations and ambulance depots. It is against this background that the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Fire Station cum Ambulance Depot as well as the fire station with ambulance facilities at the Liantang/Heung Yuen Wai Boundary Control Point, for instance, have been planned and will soon be completed to meet the demand for emergency services.

In respect of human resources management, the department started to reduce the weekly conditioned working hours of operational personnel in the Fire Stream in phases on a trial basis in mid-March 2013. Since July 18 last year, we have officially reduced the weekly conditioned working hours of the relevant personnel from 54 hours to 51 hours as favourable results were achieved during the trial period in terms of the fulfilment of the three prerequisites of cost-neutrality, non-additional manpower and maintaining the same level of service to the public.

The department established the Incident Safety Team last year having regard to the increasing variety and complexity of dangerous situations and thus the heightening danger our front-line personnel encounter during operations. Among the major functions of the team are to ensure the safety of front-line personnel at incident scenes; to review whether proper safety measures have been taken by front-line personnel at fires or major incidents; and, if necessary, to advise incident commanders on risk assessment at the scenes, so as to enhance the safety of front-line personnel in the course of their duties. Furthermore, the team is also responsible for the routine duties of developing and implementing a systematic quality assurance mechanism for the continuous improvement of firefighting and rescue services, as well as optimising routine training programmes and fine-tuning operational guidelines, with the objectives of raising our operational efficiency and enhancing occupational safety and health. Separately, we also reorganised the Incident and Fire Safety Support Unit into the Tactical Support Unit in 2017. The Tactical Support Unit attends to and renders assistance in the event of No. 3 or above alarm fires or in major incidents when manpower is in greater demand. The unit also provides standby service during major festive or crowd-gathering events and assists in organising publicity activities in a bid to promote fire safety. Furthermore, a HazMat Support Unit was set up in 2017 to provide technical support and recommendations to front-line personnel with a view to further enhancing their safety and professional capability in handling hazmat incidents.

To prevent vessel fires, the department steps up fire safety publicity and educational efforts at major typhoon shelters every year during the peak seasons, including the fishing moratorium, the Lunar New Year, the Tin Hau Festival, and Spring and Autumn Ancestral Offerings Ceremonies. In 2017, in addition to talks on fire prevention for fishermen and members of the trade, the department also held 12 joint marine firefighting and rescue drills at major typhoon shelters in collaboration with relevant government departments, such as the Marine Division of the Hong Kong Police Force and the Marine Department, so as to enhance the efficiency of and co-operation between various departments in dealing with emergency incidents at

typhoon shelters.

On providing support for the ethnic minority communities, along with its ongoing efforts to raise their fire safety awareness by reaching out to different ethnic minorities through various means, the department has been recruiting Building Fire Safety Envoys in areas with a higher ratio of ethnic minority population in the hope of enlisting their help to disseminate fire safety messages to their communities. As at the end of last year, a total of 474 members of ethnic minorities were recruited as Building Fire Safety Envoys across the territory. Given the high number of families employing foreign domestic helpers in Hong Kong nowadays, the department also organises fire safety talks for foreign domestic helpers in collaboration with relevant organisations with a view to raising their awareness of household fire safety. To cater for members of ethnic minorities who are interested in joining the department, we have enhanced collaboration with schools with a relatively high enrolment of ethnic minority students and ethnic minority organisations in holding career talks to help them better understand the requirements of individual posts in the department and prepare for recruitment. In light of their language proficiency, the department has also made appropriate arrangements to help them pass the recruitment exercises and foundation training courses.

Opened in early 2016 and fully commissioned last year, the Fire and Ambulance Services Academy (FASA) not only has significantly enhanced the department's overall professional training capability, but also serves as a convenient platform for mutual exchanges between the department and its fire and ambulance counterparts in neighbouring areas, thereby ensuring the professionalism and sustainable development of the department. Last year, the FASA organised over 120 kinds of training and professional exchange programmes attracting more than 12 000 participants in total, which far surpassed the attendance previously attained by the Pat Heung Fire Services Training Centre.

To cope with the increasing amount and complexity of administrative work, the department upgraded the Departmental Secretary post to the rank of Senior Principal Executive Officer in

2017, thereby reinforcing its capability in human and financial resources planning, as well as enhancing the management of other administrative areas.

In October 2017, the department held the first-ever Fire Services Remembrance Day to pay tribute to members who lost their lives in the line of duty, and to express gratitude to all former members for their dedication and contribution over the years, which laid a solid foundation for the professional service and sustainable development of the department. The Remembrance Day also signifies the passing on of the finest traditions to the next generation - encouraging members to learn from their predecessors and carry on with their gallantry, perseverance and professionalism.

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

As to human resources, we recruited a total of 649 fire and ambulance personnel in 2017, including 139 officers and 510 rank-and-file staff. It is estimated that some 647 fire and ambulance personnel, including 104 officers and 543 rank-and-file staff, will be recruited to fill vacancies in 2018.

The Third Generation Mobilising System currently in use has been operating for more than 10 years and is expected to reach its serviceable life in 2022. The department has begun to develop the Fourth Generation Mobilising System (4GMS) to enhance the system's operational reliability and its efficiency in handling emergency calls and mobilising resources, thereby bringing the department's response capability to a higher standard. Two active Fire Services Communications Centres will be established for the 4GMS to ensure uninterrupted mobilisation of resources. Apart from text messages and conversations, the new system will also support the transfer of real-time photos and videos to provide a better grasp of the situation at the incident scene. The department will also explore the feasibility of including a function that identifies a mobile phone caller's location. This new function, along with an enhanced geographic information system and the newly introduced real-time traffic

information system, will enable a more accurate identification of the location of an incident, precise tracking of resources deployment and identification of the fastest route to an incident scene, all of which will allow fire appliances and ambulances to arrive on the scene more promptly. The new system is expected to be commissioned in 2022.

The department has been offering simple post-dispatch advice (PDA) to 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 conditions. Since the service has been well received by the general public, the department is currently developing a comprehensive PDA computer system to assist operators in systematically obtaining information on patients' conditions upon receipt of ambulance calls and, through analysis by the computer system, accurately providing detailed and appropriate PDA to the callers, so that the callers can handle the patients according to the PDA prior to the arrival of the ambulance crew and help stabilise the patients' conditions. It is anticipated that the new PDA service will be introduced in the second quarter of 2018, with its scope to be expanded to cover more than 30 types of injuries/sickness.

In response to the need to improve the fire safety of old-style industrial buildings, the department is actively working on the drafting of relevant legislation. The Security Bureau sought the views of the Panel on Security of the Legislative Council (LegCo) on the legislative proposal on April 11 last year. We plan to introduce the relevant bill to the LegCo in 2018.

Regarding the implementation of the Registered Fire Engineer Scheme, the relevant bill has been passed by the LegCo and gazetted. We are now actively preparing a new round of industry consultation to seek the industry's views on the specific details of the scheme. We expect to introduce the new regulation to the LegCo in the third quarter of 2018. After the LegCo has completed the scrutiny, the department will implement the scheme as soon as possible to facilitate business operation and to optimise the use of professional human

resources in the market.

To further enhance the public's knowledge on CPR and AEDs as well as their response capability, the department will take further forward the "Press to shock - Save a life" Public Access Defibrillation course and the Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation Training Programme in Campus launched in mid-2017. Through the two initiatives, the department will inform people from different sectors, including local secondary and tertiary students, of the importance of prompt application of CPR and defibrillation, and provide them with the basic knowledge of CPR and demonstrations of using AEDs, thereby strengthening the public's response capability in handling cardiac arrest.

Conclusion

That's all for the review of our work in 2017 and the outline of our future initiatives. Our satisfactory performance in firefighting, rescue, emergency ambulance and fire prevention services is the fruition of not only the concerted efforts of all members of the department, but also the timely allocation of considerable resources by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government to construct the new FASA with an aim of ensuring that Hong Kong will continue to be an advanced and safe international city. The establishment of the FASA has significantly enhanced the professional training capability of the department in fire and ambulance services, thereby ensuring the sustainable development of all members' professional skills to keep pace with the rapid development of society and to meet the challenges posed by extreme weather. On behalf of my colleagues, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to all sectors of the community for their support and encouragement in the past year. We shall remain steadfast at our posts and stand ready to perform our duties with professionalism and determination.

It has been a century and a half since the Fire Services Department was established in 1868. To mark the department's 150th anniversary, we are organising a series of events in

celebration of such an important milestone. Over the past 150 years, the department has, together with the people of Hong Kong, persevered in the ups and downs of our city, sparing no effort to fulfil our mission of "Serving with courage, passion and commitment". Looking into the future, the department will carry on its traditions and at the same time keep pace with the times to make sure that Hong Kong is an ideal place to live and work.

The Lunar New Year will arrive in less than two weeks' time. May I wish our media friends in advance peace, joy and prosperity in the Year of the Dog. Thank you.

END

Tuesday, February 6, 2018