

The 18th Fire Services Department Public Liaison Group

Notes of the Second Meeting

The second meeting of the 18th Fire Services Department Public Liaison Group (PLG) was held at the Multi-Purpose Hall, G/F., Fire Services Headquarters Building on 5th December 2011 at 6:30 p.m..

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Opening Remarks

The Department welcomed all members to the second meeting of the 18th Fire Services Department (FSD) Public Liaison Group (PLG) and introduced each departmental representative in attendance.

2. Confirmation of the Notes of the Last Meeting

2.1 The notes of the last meeting were confirmed without amendments.

Matters Arising from Previous Meeting

3. Activities of PLG

3.1 The Department said that FSD had invited PLG members to attend the following activities in the past few months:

- Hillfire Prevention Publicity Campaign (24 September 2011)
- 156th Passing-out cum Director's Farewell Parade (30 September 2011)
- Fire Prevention Campaign 2011 (4 November 2011)
- Inter-departmental Vegetation Fire-cum-Mountain Rescue Exercise 2011 (14 November 2011)

3.2 The Department told members that the Department would hold the Christmas Reception on 20 December. PLG Members would be invited to join the event.

3.3 One of the PLG members asked in writing before the meeting about the activities of PLG in the future and suggested visiting the Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Team, HazMat Team and Airport Fire Station. The Department said that the Department would organise visits for PLG members as far as practicable. However, the Department needed to coordinate with the units concerned (such as taking their drill schedules into consideration) before organising such activities. With regard to the suggestion of visiting the Airport Fire Station, the Department pointed out that the Airport Fire Station was situated in the restricted area and shall not be accessed by the public in principle. The Department would attempt to arrange the visit by making special application to the airport authority. The number of participants would also be limited.

4. Performance Pledges of FSD

4.1 The Department mentioned that from 1 January to 30 November 2011, FSD responded to an average of 93.32% of fire incidents within the graded response time, while the response time performance of ambulance service was 93.50%.

From January to November 2011, a total of 630 631 ambulance calls were received, i.e. 1 888 calls per day on average, representing an increase of 0.40% when compared with the same period of 2010.

5. Publicity Activities of FSD

5.1 The Department told members that the number of visitors to the Fire Safety Education Bus had reached 13 583 by end of October and favourable response had been received from the public with numerous reservation requests. The Bus would continue to visit schools, housing estates and community halls, etc. in different districts to conduct fire protection publicity and education.

5.2 A PLG member asked whether the visitors to the Bus were mainly local residents or students. The Department said that according to the schedule of the Fire Safety Education Bus in December, the Bus would mainly visit fire stations on open days, housing estates and hospitals, with a view to providing opportunities for people from all walks of life to visit the Bus. The Department said that the Department hoped that the Fire Safety Education Bus could tour around the community to spread fire prevention messages, thereby raising the fire prevention awareness of people of different age ranges.

5.3 A PLG member asked whether the present number of visitors had reached the Department's target. He said that the Bus once visited the housing estate where he lived, but many residents did not have a chance to visit the bus because there were too many visitors waiting and the Bus had to rush to the next place for exhibition. He asked whether the Department would procure another Fire

Safety Education Bus. The Department said that the Department had not set any target for the number of visitors, but it was hoped that more people would be given a chance to visit the bus. As to whether the Department would procure another Fire Safety Education Bus, it depended on the allocation of resources by the Government. In addition to the Fire Safety Education Bus, the Department also spread fire prevention messages via various channels including mobile publicity vehicles, electronic media, radios and publicity activities.

5.4 The Department mentioned that the TV programme for the Launching of Fire Prevention Campaign 2011, “Fire Safety: A Message to Bring Home”, was broadcast by TVB Jade from 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. on 11 November. The theme of this year was “Means of escape keeping clear, Fire plans help save lives”. This was to remind the public that apart from implementing fire prevention measures, they should also understand the means of fire evacuation, be familiarised with fire escapes in buildings and regularly participate in fire drills for their own safety and that of their families. The programme was broadcast to about 1 million viewers. On the same day, the Department also held an award presentation ceremony for the Fire Safety Ambassador and Building Fire Safety Envoy Award Scheme.

5.5 Regarding fire prevention publicity on radios, the Department remarked that FSD continued to collaborate with Radio 1 of Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) to broadcast a 30-minute radio programme in “Happy Daily” on Fridays from 11:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon. The Department had also collaborated with Commercial Radio to broadcast a fire prevention publicity programme (“做好防火每一站”) on Commercial Radio 1 FM 88.1 from 14 to 25 November (3:00

p.m. to 5:00 p.m.) and another programme (“火爆哥息怒!”) on Commercial Radio 2 FM 90.3 (4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.). The Department aimed to disseminate latest information on fire prevention through this new electronic platform.

6. Maintenance, Repair and Replacement of Ambulances

6.1 The Department indicated that FSD had already replaced 204 ambulances as scheduled. As at 24 November 2011, a total of 250 new ambulances were put into service, including 204 replacement ambulances and 46 additional ambulances. The additional ambulances would be deployed to deal with the ever-increasing ambulance calls. Besides, FSD would also replace 56 town ambulances, two cross country ambulances and purchase 21 additional town ambulances for providing additional ambulance shifts as well as maintenance and logistic support.

6.2 A PLG member enquired in writing before the meeting whether inter-hospital transfer ambulances would help perform duties of ambulance depots in addition to providing emergency inter-hospital transfer service when necessary. The Department said that the Department introduced 15 new-model inter-hospital transfer ambulances in 2011. Due to the unique design of this type of ambulance (with a hydraulic lifting platform at the rear of the vehicle) and the fact that it is only manned by 2 persons, such ambulances would only provide inter-hospital transfer service. However, under special and emergency circumstances, such as in the event of major incidents, these ambulances might participate in rescue operations.

6.3 A PLG member asked if the patient was pregnant, how FSD would decide whether to convey her to a private or public hospital. He also asked if there were many pregnant women from the Mainland requesting local emergency ambulance service and whether the problem was more serious in the North District. The Department replied that FSD would send all patients to the emergency room of the nearest public hospital for treatment. In the event of emergency childbirth on an ambulance, ambulancemen would provide assistance to the pregnant woman. The equipment needed for emergency childbirth had been installed in ambulances, and all ambulancemen had also received relevant training. Since not every call for emergency service made by pregnant women from the Mainland involved childbirth, the Department could not provide the relevant figures. However, taking the statistics in October 2011 as an example, the number of cases involving conveyance of patients coming from the Mainland to the North District Hospital was minimal.

6.4 A PLG member asked whether inter-hospital transfer ambulances would be used as ordinary ambulances in rescue operations in the event that all ambulances were carrying out duties outside the depot. The Department replied that according to the current mobilisation system, the Fire Services Control Centre (FSCC) would mobilise available ambulances nearest to the scene, instead of considering whether there was available ambulance in the nearest ambulance depot. The Department would only consider using inter-hospital transfer ambulances in rescue operations under special and emergency circumstances.

6.5 A PLG member asked what a town ambulance was. He asked whether the bus-type ambulance he once saw on the road belonged to FSD. The Department stated that a town ambulance usually operated in urban areas. Each standard ambulance was equipped with advanced paramedic instruments, so that ambulance personnel could provide further pre-hospital paramedic services to patients. FSD currently had no bus-type ambulances. The ambulance the PLG member saw might belong to other organizations.

7. Fire Protection and Ambulance Services Promotion

7.1 The Department said that the Department was collaborating with RTHK to produce a five-episode sequel, “Elite Brigade”, to the Fire Services TV drama series. The first episode of the sequel would be broadcast from 7:35 p.m. to 8:35 p.m. on TVB Jade on 25 February (Saturday) in the coming year.

7.2 One PLG member expressed in writing before the meeting that people with disabilities might have difficulties escaping a fire. Therefore, he hoped that the Department would produce promotional clips to teach them how to escape. Besides, he suggested that the Department add a class in the training course for the Building Fire Safety Envoys on teaching people with disabilities how to escape, so that the Envoys could help them escape from fire. The Department expressed that FSD had prepared a promotional DVD to teach people with disabilities, including the visually impaired, hearing impaired and people with mobility problem how to escape. The promotional DVD had been despatched to care centres for people with disabilities and those in need. People who wanted a copy of the DVD may contact the Community Relations Unit.

8. Future Developments of FSD

8.1 The Department told members that FSD would construct a new ambulance depot in Choi Shun Street, Sheung Shui to cope with the demand for ambulance service in the North District in the New Territories. The construction work was expected to commence in January 2013 and complete in November 2014.

8.2 One PLG member suggested in writing that Lai King Fire Station be renamed as Lai King Fire Station cum Ambulance Depot, and light pumping appliance or major pump to be stationed at Lai King Fire Station. The Department replied that currently there were only fire appliances but no ambulance in Lai King Fire Station. Therefore, it was just a fire station. FSD would review fire and ambulance services from time to time. In addition to the overall standard of service, FSD would also take the future development projects proposed by the Government into consideration when assessing the actual demand for fire stations and ambulance depots in different districts. If the Department considered improvement or adjustment of existing facilities or manpower resources necessary, it would seek additional resources from the Administration. To date, FSD had no plan to station light pumping appliance or major pump at Lai King Fire Station.

8.3 One PLG member enquired in writing before the meeting whether the Department would roll out new programmes or introduce new equipment in the future. Besides, he asked about the effectiveness of the initiatives launched by FSD (e.g. Fire Investigation Dogs, USAR Dogs and Rapid Response Vehicle)

over the past years. The Department said that the management personnel of FSD would review circumstances from time to time to formulate the plan for its long-term development. Relevant information would be disclosed in press conferences, briefing sessions or other appropriate occasions. The Department explained to members the effectiveness of Fire Investigation Dogs, USAR Dogs and Rapid Response Vehicle as follows:

Fire Investigation Dogs

- In 2007, FSD introduced two well-trained Fire Investigation Dogs, Dexter (male) and Sasha (female) from the United Kingdom. In fire investigation, Fire Investigation Dogs mainly capitalised on their inborn sensitive sense of smell to help dog handlers determine whether there was flammable liquid at the scene, trace the source of fire and look for exhibits, such as abandoned containers of flammable liquid outside the scene. Since dogs' sense of smell was even more sensitive and accurate than electronic devices, they could detect flammable liquid at the scene more accurately. Their agility helped carry out search over a large area swiftly and efficiently, thereby narrowing the target area and shortening the time spent by investigation personnel on excavation and collecting embers. Put into service on 1 February 2007, the Fire Investigation Dog Team had been highly effective in conducting at-scene detection in numerous fire incidents and helped relevant personnel confirm the existence of flammable liquid quickly. The Department was reviewing the work of the Fire Investigation Dog Team to formulate future development plans.

USAR Dogs

- To accommodate the development of USAR Team, the Department had been determined to introduce USAR Dogs to enhance the operation efficiency of USAR Team since 2009. The two USAR Dogs of FSD, named WAI WAI and ON ON, had undergone a 6-month training in the National Search and Rescue Training Base. USAR Dogs played a vital role in search operations. With their acute sense of smell, they were extremely efficient in searching over a large area quickly and looking for survivors beneath collapsed structures. The two USAR Dogs had been put into service since 10 January 2011. In the event of structure collapse, or if officer-in-charge of the incident required reinforcement from USAR Team, USAR Dogs would be deployed to assist in search and rescue operation at the scene. Although they had only been put into service for a short period of time, their performance was undeniably effective.

Rapid Response Vehicle

- Rapid Response Vehicles provided emergency ambulance service for 1 414 cases and conducted inspection on 2 979 cases from January to October this year. Since the end of 2006, the effectiveness of this programme had been proved in various aspects, which included enhanced management of frontline ambulance personnel, improved quality of pre-hospital treatment and emergency response to major incidents.

9. Abuse of Ambulance Service

9.1 Members agreed to delete this item.

10. Recruitment Matters

10.1 One PLG member expressed in writing before the meeting that as reported by newspaper, the working hours of fire personnel were longer than that of other disciplined services, while the Standing Committee on Disciplined Services Salaries and Conditions of Service (SCDS) remarked that the proposal on reduction in working hours must fulfill the “Three Pre-requisites”. The member asked whether the Department would consider seeking approval from the Government for recruiting additional staff. The Department said that FSD was closely liaising with staff side representatives, with a view to reaching a consensus and discussing matters related to reduction in conditioned working hours of fire personnel. FSD was obliged to uphold the principle of efficient use of resources stipulated by the Government on one hand, and strive for benefits and service conditions deserved by its members on the other. Provided that the Department could strike a balance between the Government’s public service policy and service conditions of FSD members, FSD would make the utmost efforts to assist the Association in fighting for rights and interests under the “Three Pre-requisites”.

10.2 A PLG member asked whether the reduction in conditioned hours of work per week would affect the public. The Department said that one of the “Three Pre-requisites” was “maintaining the same level of service to the public”. Therefore, the public did not need to worry that the reduction in conditioned working hours per week of fire personnel would affect the current standard of service.

11. Matters concerning Fire Safety Inspections

11.1 One PLG member enquired in writing before the meeting whether the Department could report the number of inspections conducted to “blackspot” buildings with high fire risk (e.g. Tai On Building, Chung King Mansions, Mirador Mansions and State Theatre Building, etc.), Fire Hazard Abatement Notices issued and irregularities. The Department expressed that FSD would continue to adopt the “four-pronged” approach in buildings with high fire risk and located in densely populated areas with a view to completely removing fire hazards and enhancing the fire safety standard of those buildings. If the public found that fire hazards existed at the place where they lived or worked, they could make complaints via the 24-hour hotline of FSCC at 2723 8787, so that fire personnel could carry out inspection accordingly.

11.2 The Department continued that FSD would inspect buildings with fire hazards regularly and initiate enforcement actions. In 2010, FSD issued about 1 700 Fire Hazard Abatement Notices and instituted 84 prosecutions in respect of floating obstructions to means of escape and locked exits. The Department also issued 3 865 Fire Hazard Abatement Notices and instituted 148 prosecutions in respect of other irregularities that might cause a fire (including removal of fire stop door or damaged smoke lobby). In addition, FSD instituted 228 direct prosecutions to abate fire hazards. FSD would not disclose the number of fire incidents, or that of Fire Hazard Abatement Notices or irregularities in respect of individual buildings. However, if it was found that any building was subject to serious fire hazard, FSD would institute prosecution or take follow-up action,

such as conducting risk assessment and formulation of plans to increase the manpower and vehicles to be mobilized in the event of fire.

11.3 With regards to certain old buildings that had not established owners' corporations or management offices, a PLG member asked how FSD would issue Fire Hazard Abatement Notices to units contravening the regulations. The Department expressed that depending upon circumstances, inspection officers would issue Fire Hazard Abatement Notices to unit owners or tenants directly. The Department said that Fire Hazard Abatement Notice was legally binding. If offenders did not remove fire hazards as required, they might be prosecuted.

11.4 A PLG member asked whether FSD's scope of inspection covered public housing estates under the Housing Department. The Department said that FSD would regularly inspect all buildings in Hong Kong, including public housing estates.

11.5 A PLG member suggested that the Department should educate people on information about fire alarms so that they could understand the level of danger represented by different fire alarms. He also asked how FSD would assist in organising fire drills in old buildings. The Department said that the Department disseminated information about different fire alarms in the past. The Department would consider spreading the relevant information again as appropriate. Currently, the Department would assist District Fire Safety Committees in organising fire drills. In respect of "three nil" buildings, i.e. those without owners' corporations, residents' organisations or property

management companies, the public might contact the Liaison Officers of the Home Affairs Department for assistance.

12. Medical Priority Dispatch System

12.1 The Department said that FSD provided simple post-dispatch advice to callers since 1 May this year for three types of emergency ambulance calls, namely bleeding, fracture or dislocation of limbs and burn. As at 31 October, FSCC operators provided post-dispatch advice for 1 341 cases, including 1 191 cases for bleeding, 107 cases for fracture and dislocation of limbs and 43 cases for burn. During the same period, the Department conducted telephone survey of callers who had received post-dispatch advice. Among the 700 respondents, 97.7% were satisfied with the post-dispatch advice they received; 96.9% agreed that the advice was useful in handling the patients; and 98.2% agreed that the Department should continue to provide post-dispatch advice in the future.

12.2 The Department continued that the abovementioned results of survey showed that a majority of people who had received first aid advice were satisfied with the service and agreed that the advice was helpful to the patients. They also considered that FSD should provide this type of service in the future. Therefore, if resources permitted, the Department would gradually extend and enhance such service.

12.3 A PLG member expressed that the above survey only interviewed callers who had received post-dispatch advice. He suggested that the Department interview its ambulance personnel to confirm whether the callers had followed the

post-dispatch advice when they arrived at the scene. The Department thanked the member for his suggestion and expressed that the Department would consider it carefully.

13. Cross-border Ambulance Services

13.1 Members agreed to delete this item.

14. New Fire Tunics

14.1 Members agreed to delete this item.

15. Procurement Issues of FSD

15.1 Members agreed to delete this item.

16. Naming of Ranks

16.1 The Department indicated that Chief Fire Officers/Chief Ambulance Officer, whose posts were equivalent to Directorate Pay Scale Point 2 (D2), would be renamed as Assistant Director when liaising with other government departments and non-governmental parties commencing on 1 September 2011 for ease of identification.

17. Fire Appliances

17.1 The Department said that the Department could not reach an agreement with the supplier of the 17 GIMAEX hydraulic platforms previously purchased. As such, the Government informed the supplier in writing at the end of September that the relevant contract was terminated and it reserved all rights to claim compensation and legal rights. Since legal proceedings had been conducted, the Department could not disclose any details. Members agreed to delete this item.

17.2 One PLG member expressed in writing before the meeting that the sound level of siren of certain fire appliances and ambulances performing emergency duties was relatively low. The Department said that the Department had clear guidelines and instructions on the use of audio and visual alarm devices, which FSD members must observe when driving fire appliances and ambulances. Members of the Department might also adjust the sound level of siren according to actual traffic conditions to alert pedestrians and other road users.

18. Communication Equipment in Country Parks

18.1 Members agreed to delete this item.

New Items

19. High Angle Rescue Team

19.1 One PLG member requested in writing before the meeting the Department to

briefly introduce the establishment, duties and training of the High Angle Rescue Team. The Department expressed that Hong Kong was an international city with a lot of skyscrapers. In recent years, there had been more and more high-rise buildings which kept scaling new heights. Some of them even measured hundreds of metres in height (e.g. the bridge tower of the Stonecutters Bridge was 298 metres high, while the International Commerce Centre even reached 490 metres in height.). To handle accidents that might occur during the construction and maintenance of such buildings, FSD started its plan for establishing a high angle rescue team in 2010, which would be specialised in different types of high angle rescue operations (high angle environment refers to those with a 60-degree angle to a 90-degree (vertical angle), with both feet off the ground). In addition to procurement of more advanced tools for high angle rescue, the Department also strived to improve the high angle rescue techniques of rescue personnel, with a view to providing services of better quality to the public. The establishment, duties and training of the High Angle Rescue Team were as follows:

Establishment

- The High Angle Rescue Team comprising a total of 42 members was established on 12 August 2011. The Team was split into two sub-teams stationing at Pok Fu Lam Fire Station and Tin Sum Fire Station, respectively. Apart from carrying out normal fire-fighting and rescue operations, members of the team would turn out for complex high angle rescue upon receiving calls from FSCC. At the same time, FSCC would inform the commander of the High Angle Rescue Team and trainers of the Special Rescue Squad to provide technical support at the scene. When the High

Angle Rescue Team turned out, each member would be equipped with new personal protective equipment and newly procured specialised tools for high angle rescue. To handle the ever-increasing number of high angle incidents, the Department planned to establish the third fire station with the High Angle Rescue Team, Wong Tai Sin Fire Station, by recruiting and training more members to join the team.

Duties

- The work of the High Angle Rescue Team covered:
 - Tower cranes at construction sites;
 - Cranes at container terminal;
 - Suspended working platform outside the exterior wall of buildings;
 - Bamboo scaffolding outside the exterior wall of buildings;
 - Cable-car systems in Tung Chung and Aberdeen;
 - Bridge towers;
 - Wind turbines;
 - Amusement park rides; and
 - All complex high angle incidents (rescuing persons jumping from height in response to requests by Officer-in-charge of incident)

Training

- All members of the High Angle Rescue Team were qualified personnel of the Special Rescue Squad and passed the aptitude test. Selected from about 380 operational personnel who volunteered to join the team, they then received 5 weeks of specialised training. The training included a 2-week training course for Level 1 Rope Access Technician recognised by IRATA

(International Rope Access Trade Association) and a 3-week field training to familiarise the team members with different circumstances concerning high angle rescue.

- Upon completion of the 5-week training programme and passing of examination conducted by foreign examiners, the team members would be assigned to the fire stations with the High Angle Rescue Team. After that, the Department would also arrange continuous training and at-site drills in a high angle environment for the team members to maintain their standard of techniques, as well as to ensure that each member received a minimum of 80 hours of training every year. Members of the High Angle Rescue Team shall undergo technical review conducted by foreign examiners every 3 years. Selected members must have good physical fitness, excellent psychological quality, cool-headed and the ability to respond to emergencies independently.

20. Recommendations from Coroner's Court on the No. 4 Alarm Fire at Lai Cheung Factory Building

20.1 One PLG member expressed in writing before the meeting that the Coroner's Court had made 3 recommendations on the No. 4 Alarm Fire at Lai Cheung Factory Building, which included that operators at FSCC shall not handle general enquiries; firefighters shall not be exempted from physical fitness assessment; and all firefighters equipped with breathing apparatus (BA) must strictly follow the entry control procedures. The PLG member asked how the Department would implement the above recommendations and the progress thereof.

20.2 The Department said that the Department had studied the recommendations of the Coroner's Court and the progress was reported as follows:

Recommendation 1: Operators at FSCC shall not handle general enquiries

- FSD had started a trial to assign designated personnel for handling general enquiries, so that members who were responsible for mobilisation of operational resources could concentrate on emergency mobilisation duties. FSD would also duly study the use of interactive voice response system in handling general enquiries.

Recommendation 2: Firefighters shall not be exempted from physical fitness assessment

- FSD would look into the viability of this recommendation and incorporate it into the Department's internal consultation paper on Annual Physical Fitness Assessment to seek views from its members.

Recommendation 3: All firefighters equipped with breathing apparatus must strictly follow the entry control procedures (i.e. the procedures to be followed by firefighters entering the scene of fire incident with BA)

- FSD formulated BA entry control procedures to ensure the safety of all personnel carrying out firefighting and rescue duties at the scene. Therefore, all fire personnel must strictly follow these procedures.
- Since November 2010, FSD had enhanced the monitor on and record of compliance with the relevant procedures by frontline personnel. In

addition, FSD members were tested and assessed on their familiarity with such procedures through daily BA training to ensure that every member had strictly followed the regulations. The relevant record was also useful in determining whether relevant supplementary training was necessary.

- FSD would continue to ensure that all fire personnel had strictly followed the BA entry control procedures and raise members' personal safety awareness through training and examination.

21. Equipment in Ambulances

21.1 One PLG member expressed in writing before the meeting that it was mentioned in a Coroner inquest that a patient could not be promptly rescued because the ambulance was not equipped with "ET tube" (氣道內管). He asked whether it was the case and whether the Department would consider procuring this apparatus in the future. The Department said that the Department was not in a position to comment on the above case at this stage because it was being processed by the Judiciary.

22. Ambulance Services

22.1 One PLG member expressed in writing before the meeting that there were not enough ambulances in Lai King District and suggested that the Department enhance the ambulance services there. The Department stated that out of a total of 3 305 emergency ambulance calls in Lai King District handled by the Department from January to October this year, about 97.25% were handled

within the target response time of 12 minutes, which was even better than the Department's performance pledges (92.5%). Thus, Kwai Chung Ambulance Depot and Lai Chi Kok Ambulance Depot, which were providing ambulance services to Lai King District, were able to cope with the current demand for ambulance service. The Department would regularly review circumstances of ambulance service in the territory and mobilise resources correspondingly.

23. Law Enforcement Procedures Adopted by Fire Personnel

23.1 One PLG member expressed in writing before the meeting that according to a piece of news reported by the Oriental Daily on 8 November 2011, when investigating a case of illegal diesel filling station, FSD mobilised fire appliances which alerted the offenders and gave them a chance to escape. He opined that FSD personnel should notify the Police to take appropriate action if illegal diesel filling station was spotted. The Department said that the Department had been deeply concerned about the news reported by the Oriental Daily on 8 November 2011 about the illegal storage and transfer of fuel. Apart from conducting regular inspections to relevant black spots, FSD would also take joint action with other law enforcement authorities. FSD would take corresponding actions against any illegal activities in accordance with the authority conferred by laws. According to the news report, the irregularity was mainly related to the following Ordinances:

- Section 6 of Dangerous Goods Ordinance, Cap. 295, which stated that “except under and in accordance with a licence granted under this Ordinance, no person shall manufacture, store, convey or use any dangerous

goods”. As such, anyone storing petrol or diesel in excess of the prescribed exempted quantity of 20 litres and 2,500 litres, respectively, shall apply to the Department for a dangerous goods store licence.

- Section 19(1) of Fire Services (Fire Hazard Abatement) Regulation, Cap. 95F, which clearly stated that a person commits an offence if he has possession or control of a controlled substance (i.e. Category 5 Dangerous Goods (including petrol and diesel) as stipulated in Dangerous Goods (Application and Exemption) Regulations, Cap. 295A) in or on any premises for the purpose of a business of supplying the substance for transferring to the fuel tank of a motor vehicle.

23.2 The Department continued that the above Ordinances were within the jurisdiction of the Department. Therefore, upon receipt of complaints made by the public according to dangerous goods legislations, the Department would investigate the scene within 24 hours as stated in its performance pledge. Depending on the circumstances and the actual need at the scene, personnel of the Department would consider whether it was necessary to notify the Police or other departments for taking enforcement actions.

24. Workflow for Handling Traffic Accidents by Ambulance and Fire Personnel

24.1 One PLG member suggested in writing before the meeting that in the course of handling traffic accidents, ambulance personnel should arrange preliminary check for patients before the fire personnel breaking into the vehicle; or ambulance and fire personnel should take action simultaneously to speed up the

rescue. The Department said that fire and ambulance personnel had been working closely with each other when handling traffic accidents. Under normal circumstances, fire personnel would assist ambulance personnel in checking and handling injured persons once they had ensured that the scene was under control and safe, so that the injured persons would be rescued as soon as possible. The Department said that the Department had a First Responder Programme, under which trained frontline fire personnel would provide basic life sustaining treatment to patients before ambulance personnel arrived at the scene. The Department also organised training courses on road traffic accident rescue for fire personnel to improve their techniques in handling such accidents. In short, the Department would strive to rescue all the injured persons in a safe and swift manner.

Any Other Business

25. Matters Concerning Ambulances

25.1 A PLG member said that the Mobile Casualty Treatment Centre (MCTC) previously stationed at Tai Po Ambulance Depot would be deployed to Yuen Long Ambulance Depot. He asked whether the arrangement was a permanent one and whether this would affect the ambulance service in the New Territories East. The Department said that the Department currently had 4 MCTCs, which were stationed at Sai Wan Ho, Ho Man Tin, Yuen Long and Tsing Yi Ambulance Depot, respectively. The Department would review the stationing location of these vehicles from time to time and would take factors such as changes in prevailing road conditions into account, so that these vehicles could arrive at the scene as soon as possible. The above MCTC was deployed to Yuen Long

Ambulance Depot because of reduction in travelling time thanks to the well-developed transportation network in Yuen Long District, which facilitated quicker access to various highways. Besides, there were Ambulance Officers on duty at Yuen Long Ambulance Depot 24 hours a day. In the event of major incident requiring turnout of MCTC, Yuen Long Ambulance Station would be able to make corresponding arrangement effectively. In sum, the aforesaid deployment would be a permanent arrangement.

25.2 A PLG member said that the yellow jackets worn by riders of Emergency Medical Assistant Motorcycle seemed stuffy. He asked whether the Department would review the design. The Department said that the reflective material of the yellow jackets worn by riders of Emergency Medical Assistant Motorcycle could alert other road users to ensure safety. Regarding the clothing of riders of Emergency Medical Assistant Motorcycle, the Department had recently conducted a review on the yellow jacket and the results were pending.

25.3 A PLG member said that according to a media report, FSD had procured defective ambulances. He asked whether it was true. The Department said that the Department would take into account relevant details and seek advice from users before the procurement. The ambulances purchased previously were not defective but that they could not pass through the gate of one of the ambulance depots because it was too narrow. The Department was revamping the gate of that ambulance depot.

26. Matters Concerning Driving of Ambulances

26.1 A PLG member said that he had seen ambulances responding to emergency calls, with visual and audio alarms on, stopped in front of junctions and traffic lights when there was no other vehicle passing through. He thought that this would delay rescue for the patients and make other road users think that it was not necessary for them to give way to ambulances. Besides, while FSD personnel were driving government vehicles to carry out emergency duties with visual alarm devices and sirens activated, they should not be liable to criminal liability for traffic accidents caused by in compliance with traffic signals. As such, the rights of FSD members would be protected. The Department stated that according to Road Traffic Ordinance, control by traffic lights, traffic signs or speed limit on motor vehicles shall not apply to any motor vehicle of the Department on an occasion when it was heading to the scene of an incident if it was likely to hinder the vehicle to respond to emergency calls, so long as indicated by the sounding of a gong, bell or siren. However, the driver might still be legally liable in case of careless or reckless driving. He believed that drivers would exercise sound judgement according to road conditions when driving.

27. FSD Stress Counselling Team

27.1 A PLG member requested brief information about FSD Stress Counselling Team. The Department said that FSD established the Stress Counselling Team in 2009. Targeted at personnel of fire services, ambulance, FSCC and civilian members in need, the team aimed to relieve their mental stress or uneasiness caused by operational duties (such as major incidents) or daily work through peer counselling in the form of interview. Recently, the Department had also hired a

clinical psychologist to provide professional psychological support to members, hence helping members with mental distress overcome their hardship; strengthen members' psychological knowledge; and enhance their psychological well-being and working adaptability.

28. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Fire Services Department

February 2012