

The 20th Fire Services Department Public Liaison Group
Notes of the First Meeting

The first meeting of the 20th Fire Services Department Public Liaison Group (PLG) was held at the Multi-Purpose Hall, G/F., Fire Services Headquarters Building on 1st August 2013 at 6:30 p.m..

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Opening Remarks

The Department welcomed all members to the first meeting of the 20th 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:

- 163rd Passing-out Parade (21 June 2013)
- Happy Daily Special – Fire Services Mid Summer Carnival (13 July 2013)
- Tin Shui Wai Fire Prevention Day (20 July 2013)

3.2 A PLG member expressed in writing before the meeting that he had no idea of the operation of the Airport Fire Station and thus suggested the Department arrange a visit for the PLG members to the Airport Fire Station. The Department mentioned that owing to the location of the Airport Fire Station within the restricted area, normally it would not be open for the public. However, to enhance members' understanding of the operation of the Airport Fire Station, the Department would specially apply to the airport for a visit with a participant quota of no more than 10 either in September, October or December 2013. Successful applicants would be chosen by ballot, as is the usual practice,

if the number of applications from members exceeded the available quota. The Department might also consider holding another visit if the number of applications was too large.

- 3.3 A PLG member said that members of the previous term had been invited to participate in an aircraft emergency exercise in Tseung Kwan O and asked if the incumbent members would be invited to activities of similar nature. The Department mentioned that each Operational Command would conduct two aircraft emergency exercises, including one table-top exercise and one scenario-based drill every year. He noted the opinion from the member. However as the concerned exercise was rarely open for public participation, he would relay this view to the corresponding commands. Currently, members were invited to participate in the annual Inter-departmental Vegetation Fire-cum-Mountain Rescue Exercise. He also called upon PLG members to support the event.

4. Performance Pledges of FSD

- 4.1 The Department mentioned that during the period from 1 January to 30 June 2013, FSD responded to a total of 11 796 fire incidents and 8 047 cases of special service. On average, 93.05% of the fire incidents were responded to within the graded response time. During the said period, a total of 355 554 ambulance calls were received, i.e. 1 964 calls per day on average with a response time performance of 94.23%.
- 4.2 The Department added that the Response Time target for the building fire calls in built-up areas was 6 minutes, while those for areas of dispersed risks and isolated developments were 9 to 23 minutes. For emergency ambulance calls, the pledged response time was 12 minutes. This Department pledged to meet the above-mentioned response times in 92.5% of all emergency calls, which was counted from the time the Department received the call and substantiated the case. For building fire calls in built-up areas, the 6 minutes were allocated as: 1 minute for receiving calls and deployment, 4 minutes as travel time and the remaining 1 minute for on-site assessment by the fire personnel upon arrival at the incident scene.

5. Publicity Activities of FSD

- 5.1 The Department told members that as at the end of June 2013, the number of

visitors to the Fire Safety Education Bus had reached 48 516 and the Department had received a tremendous amount of booking requests. The Bus would continue to visit schools, housing estates and community halls, etc. in various districts to conduct fire protection publicity and education. Regarding fire prevention publicity on radio, FSD would continue to collaborate with RTHK Radio 1 to produce a 30-minute show in the radio programme *Happy Daily*. The show would be broadcast every Friday from 11:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon. To further promote the aforesaid show, RTHK organised an outdoor broadcast activity lasting for about one hour on 13 July 2013 at Central Atrium, Olympic City Two. The event was edited into a 30-minute radio programme and broadcast in *Happy Daily* from 11:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon on 19 July 2013. Photos of the event had also been uploaded to FSD website for public viewing.

6. Maintenance, Repair and Replacement of Ambulances

- 6.1 The Department said that during the period from 5 January 2009 to 17 July 2013, a total of 337 new ambulances had been put into service, including 260 replacement ambulances, two Ambulance Land Rovers and 75 additional ambulances. These additional ambulances would be deployed to deal with the ever-increasing ambulance calls and strengthen maintenance and logistic support. Moreover, FSD would also replace 30 and procure 16 town ambulances by the end of 2013 and replace 35 town ambulances by the end of 2014.
- 6.2 The Department said that the North Lantau Hospital would commence service on 24 September 2013 and provide accident and emergency service from 9a.m. to 5p.m. It was expected to provide more comprehensive medical service for residents in Lantau Island. The Department would adjust ambulance resources accordingly following the commissioning of the above facility. The number of ambulance in the day shift of Tung Chung Ambulance Depot would be increased from 4 to 6 while that in the night shift from 2 to 3. The Department added that given the dynamic deployment of ambulances, the available ambulance closest to the call address would be deployed to the scene so as to maximise the operational efficiency. With Princess Margaret Hospital as the designated hospital of Lantau Island currently, it took an ambulance at least one hour for the round-trip journey. When the North Lantau Hospital commenced operation, the journey would be largely shortened and the deployment would be sped up. Furthermore, FSD preliminarily expected that after the commissioning of the North Lantau Hospital, the demand for ambulance service would not increase with the provision of the hospital.

7. Fire Protection and Ambulance Services Promotion

- 7.1 The Department said that the Department was producing a new DVD package to promote fire protection, the contents of which included household fire prevention and means of escape for the physically immobile persons in case of fire. The production work was still in progress and was scheduled for completion in September 2013. In addition, the Department's Fire Safety Education in Kindergartens Programme had received very favourable response. Since its launch in November 2012, 982 kindergartens (61 088 children in total) had taken part in the Programme as at the end of June 2013. Besides, the Department had produced 4 children songs to promote the message of fire prevention which were uploaded onto the website. On 10 July 2013, the Department organised Fire Prevention Drama Competition for Secondary Students cum Fire Prevention Children's Song Singing Contest for Kindergartens at the Tsuen Wan Town Hall to promote and enhance the awareness of fire prevention among teenagers. Photos taken at the event had been uploaded onto the Department's website for public viewing.
- 7.2 To promote the message of household fire prevention and hill fire prevention, the Department told members that the kick-off ceremony of Fire Prevention Campaign cum video recording would be conducted at the Studio 1 of TVB City in Tseung Kwan O at 4p.m. on 27 September 2013. The programme would be broadcast on TVB Jade and HD Jade from 8:30p.m. to 9:30p.m. on 5 October 2013. The Department would invite all PLG members to the activity in due course.
- 7.3 As regards the promotion of the message of "do not misuse ambulance service", the Department mentioned that after the previous meeting, the Ambulance Command worked with the Hospital Authority, Auxiliary Medical Service and Hong Kong St. John Ambulance in organising a "Do Not Misuse Ambulance Service Roving Exhibition" on 6 April 2013 at Siu Sai Wan Promenade. The next exhibition would be held tentatively on 24 August 2013 at Tsim Sha Tsui Cultural Centre.
- 7.4 The Department continued that the Ambulance Command had held education talks on ambulance services, ambulance aid knowledge and proper use of ambulance resources in 29 primary and secondary schools as at the end of July 2013. Since its operation in February 2013, the Ambulance Service Publicity

Vehicle had attracted about 5 500 visitors as at the end of July and was well received by the public.

- 7.5 In response to a recent media report saying that the Department had to rely on the assistance from auxiliary services when providing ambulance service in an accident happened in the North Lantau Highway, the Department said that under the usual notification mechanism, when large scale or mass casualty incidents occurred, FSD, on top of deploying regular force, would also notify auxiliary services for effective utilisation of resources and better coordination among regular force and auxiliary services. Therefore, deploying auxiliary services to provide assistance in the above-mentioned incident did not imply a shortage of manpower in the Department. He also pointed out that, under the current practice, ambulance personnel, upon arrival, would first provide on-site medical triage and group casualties into red, yellow and green categories respectively according to the seriousness of their injuries with red representing the most serious condition. On the material day, FSD's ambulance transferred patients of red category to hospital immediately after the triage while patients with less serious injury would be treated by other ambulancemen and auxiliary services personnel at the scene. As such, as regards the photos taken by the media showing most of the vehicles on the said highway being vehicles of the auxiliary services, the Department believed that it was because the reporters arrived at the scene only after FSD's ambulances had left for hospital and thus could not make it to take photos of FSD's vehicles. However, the Department would always arrange for an ambulance or a mobile casualty treatment centre to remain at the scene of large scale incidents for the purpose of providing commands and medication.
- 7.6 A PLG member asked whether the ambulances of the auxiliary services had the same equipment as FSD's. The Department replied that they were not totally the same. FSD's ambulances had equipment with uniform standard and its ambulance personnel were generally more experienced in providing pre-hospital care. The Department said that since 2005, each ambulance of the Department had been manned by EMA II ambulance personnel.
- 7.7 In concluding this item, the Department introduced three useful items in case of fire - door keys, mobile telephone and wet towel, to the participants. Their functions are as follows:

Door keys:	In case the escape staircase or the corridor is full of dense smoke, citizens could return to their own flats.
Mobile telephone:	Citizens could easily seek help from rescuers and inform them of their location by mobile phone.
Wet towel:	Covering nose and mouth with wet towel could reduce the harm of smoke to the airway.

8. Future Developments of FSD

Construction of an Ambulance Depot at Choi Shun Street, Sheung Shui

- 8.1 The Department told members that the project had been in good progress and was expected to be completed in early 2015. Since there was no further progress for this project for the time being, members agreed to delete this item from next meeting's agenda.

Construction of a Fire Station cum Ambulance Facility at Cheung Yip Street, Kowloon Bay

- 8.2 The Department told members that the Kai Tak Fire Station had been in operation since 29 July 2013. The members agreed to delete this item from next meeting's agenda.
- 8.3 A PLG member asked about the radio repeaters of the new cruise terminal. The Department said that the new generation radio communication system, operated in digital format, had the main features of enhanced voice quality, better prevention of interference or interception and more voice channels, thereby enhancing radio communication efficiency to a large extent. Besides, the new radio communication system was installed with "portable repeaters", which could be flexibly deployed inside the building at the scene of incident, and thus the indoor communication of FSD's communication system was more reliable. Besides, to relieve the radio communication traffic load at the scene, the fire personnel could make use of different channels under the incident command system. The design of the new system avoided "channel jamming" by disabling other users from interfering when a channel was in use. In addition, an emergency button was provided in each hand-held radio set for use by frontline staff in case of emergency. When the emergency button was activated, the hand-held radio sets would go into the emergency mode and be able to secure the direct channel so as to inform fire personnel on the same channel for rescue.

Vehicle allocation of Cheung Sha Wan Fire Station

- 8.4 A PLG member expressed in writing before the meeting that the demand for fire service in Sham Shui Po district was expected to increase gradually given the steady increase in local population in recent years with the intake of new public housing estates (e.g. Un Chau Estate Phase 5, Cheung Sha Wan Estate, and Wing Cheong Estate) in phases. However, he observed that Cheung Sha Wan Fire Station was deployed with only one Hydraulic Platform and one Light Rescue Unit. Therefore, he asked if the Department would plan to deploy an additional Major Pump at the Station to deal with the increasing demand for the service. The Department said that according to the current arrangement, FSD would determine the number of fire appliances and the kind of equipment to be deployed to a station taking into account factors such as the fire risk and local traffic network. Meanwhile, the Department would review the fire and ambulance services from time to time. In the course of the review, apart from considering the overall service standard, the Department would also assess the actual demand for fire stations and ambulance depots in each district in the light of the future development projects proposed by the Government. If there was a need to update or adjust the existing facilities and manpower, the Department would conduct in-depth studies and follow up in this regard.
- 8.5 The Department added that the area served by Cheung Sha Wan Fire Station currently belonged to Fire Risk Category “A”. In 2012, 95.16% of the total building fire calls in Cheung Sha Wan district was handled within the graded response time, 2.66% above the Department’s target of 92.5% in its performance pledge. FSD would review the fire risk of each district from time to time and strategically deploy fire appliances according to operational needs. For example, the Department had made the strategic adjustments to the following fire stations in the previous few years:

Lam Tin Fire Station:	1 Hydraulic Platform added
Yau Tong Fire Station:	1 Major Pump added
Sham Tseng Fire Station:	1 Hydraulic Platform and 1 Light Rescue Unit added
Pat Heung Fire Station:	1 Light Rescue Unit added
Sunny Bay Fire Station:	1 Major Pump reduced

Besides, the Department would also deploy additional vehicles in the following fire stations:

Tsim Sha Tsui East Fire Station: 1 turntable ladder – 55m to be added
Shun Lee Fire Station: 1 turntable ladder – 37m to be added

8.6 A PLG member said that if the two fire appliances deployed at Cheung Sha Wan Fire Station had to respond to call, fire appliances of other districts would have to take up their duties in case another incident occurred in the same district. He worried that the fire service resources of the neighbouring district would thus reduce. The Department said that the response time performance was calculated based on the handling of local incidents by ambulances, whether they were deployed from the concerned district or other district. In the light of the figures mentioned in Para 8.5, the Department considered the service performance of handling building fire calls in Cheung Sha Wan district satisfactory. Therefore, the Department had no plan to deploy additional fire appliances at Cheung Sha Wan Fire Station for the time being.

8.7 A PLG member, considering that the turntable ladder was rather tall, asked whether the appliance could go through tunnels in the territory. The Department replied that the fire appliances of the Department could pass through the tunnel safely as long as it reached the height of 4.5 metres. Currently, fire appliances of the Department could pass through all tunnels in the territory. Besides, the tunnel companies would invite FSD for advice when constructing new tunnels. Therefore, public concern was unnecessary.

9. Post-dispatch Advice

9.1 The Department said that from the time the Department had started providing post-dispatch advice till the end of June 2013, Fire Services Communications Centre (FSCC) operators had provided post-dispatch advice for 10 325 cases, including 7 863 bleeding cases, 966 fracture and dislocation of limbs cases, 280 burn cases, 1 086 convulsion cases, 105 heat stroke cases and 25 hypothermia cases. As at the end of June 2013, of the 5 364 respondents to the telephone survey, 99.3% were satisfied with the post-dispatch advice they received; 99.0% agreed that the advice was useful in handling the patients; and 99.7% agreed that the Department should continue to provide post-dispatch advice in the future.

10. Reduction in Conditioned Working Hours of Fire Personnel

10.1 The Department mentioned that the prevailing conditioned working hours of the personnel of the operational unit were 54 per week, which were the longest

among the disciplinary forces. On this issue, the Standing Committee on Disciplined Services Salaries and Conditions of Service required all proposals relating to the reduction of the conditioned hours of work to meet the three pre-conditions, i.e. “cost-neutral”, “no additional manpower” and “maintaining the same level of service to the public”. In this regard, the Department proposed the “New 51 Proposal”, which complied with the three mentioned pre-conditions. With the implementation of the first phase on 15 March 2013, the trial scheme under the “New 51 Proposal” entered its second phase and had been running smoothly so far. During the three-month second phase, the scheme was also extended from Hong Kong Command to South Division of Kowloon Command, South Division of New Territories Command and Mobilising and Communications Group. If the second phase of the trial scheme could achieve the expected outcome, the Department would commence the third phase in all districts and put the trial scheme into full implementation. The relevant trial period of the scheme would generally last for three years.

11. Mementos of PLG

11.1 The Department said that the procurement of the mementos (lapel pin) had been completed. The concerned mementos were also distributed to the new members at the 20th Fire Services Department Public Liaison Group Appointment Certificate Presentation Ceremony, while the Secretary had sent them to the members of the previous term by post.

11.2 Members agreed to delete this item from next meeting’s agenda.

12. Matters Concerning the Management of Old Uniforms and Appliances

12.1 Members agreed to delete this item from next meeting’s agenda.

13. Inquest into the Fa Yuen Street Fire

13.1 Members agreed to delete this item from next meeting’s agenda.

14. Impact of the Civil Service Retirement Wave

14.1 Members agreed to delete this item from next meeting’s agenda.

New Items

15. Matters Concerning the New Hydraulic Platform

15.1 A PLG member asked in writing before the meeting about the differences between the new and the old model of Hydraulic Platform in terms of the equipment and safety. The Department said that the newly procured model of Hydraulic Platform was largely the same as the old one in terms of equipment and safety. But the new one had an additional feature of meeting the latest Euro emission standard (Euro V). The Department had obtained approval to procure an additional Hydraulic Platform and replace 21 Hydraulic Platforms, of which 14 tenders were now being assessed. Besides, the Department planned to procure two additional and replace 3 Hydraulic Platforms this and the following year.

Any Other Business

16. Incidents happened in the airport

16.1 A PLG member referred to a recent aircraft accident happened in US in which a passenger was run over and killed by a fire appliance and asked whether Hong Kong's fire appliances deployed at the airport were equipped with any detection device to prevent the occurrence of similar incidents. The Department replied that the Department's fire and ambulance service in the airport had met the requirements stipulated by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). Although the corresponding guidelines did not mandatorily require fire appliances at the airport to install thermal imagers, some fire appliances of the Department had installed such device, and the Department was also considering providing such devices for all airport fire appliances in due course. Concerning the response time of the fire appliance at the airport, the Department said that the concerned requirements and rescue strategies for the airport fire appliance were different from those for urban areas. For example, if an incident happened on the runway, the airport fire appliance had to reach the scene within 2 minutes, while the arrival time was 3 minutes for other areas within the airport.

22. There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.