

## **The 11<sup>th</sup> Fire Services Department Public Liaison Group**

### **Notes of the Second Meeting**

The second meeting of the 11<sup>th</sup> Fire Services Department Liaison Group (PLG) was held at the multi-purpose hall on G/F, Fire Services Headquarters Building on 20 September 2004 at 6:30 p.m.

#### **Opening Remarks**

The Department welcomed all members to the second meeting of the 11<sup>th</sup> PLG and introduced the new departmental representatives to the meeting.

#### **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 Meetings**

#### **3. Activities of the PLG**

3.1 It was reported that members were invited to attend the “Oil Tank Fire Quiz Competition” held on 25 June and the “Heavy-duty Monitor/ Nozzle Demonstration” on 19 August this year. Fire Safety Ambassador Trainer courses had also been arranged for members on 19 and 20 June. Two members had taken the courses and become Fire Safety Ambassador Trainers after passing the assessment test. In addition, “2004 Hillfire Prevention Publicity Campaign Launching Ceremony” would be held at Sha Tin Park on 8 October (Friday) at 3 p.m. and invitation would be extended to members later. As discussed in the last meeting, the Department would also make arrangements for members to observe the operation of the Third Generation Mobilizing System after its commission.

#### **4. Civic Education**

4.1 Members agreed to delete this item from the agenda of the next meeting.

## **5. New Fire Appliances and Ambulances**

- 5.1 The Department remarked that 11 members had participated in the Heavy-duty Monitor/ Nozzle Demonstration on 19 August. For members who had not taken part in the activity, information leaflets on the equipment were put on the table for their reference.

## **6. World Firefighter Games (WFG)**

- 6.1 Members were told that the FSD team had won 96 medals in the 8<sup>th</sup> WFG at Sheffield, U.K., coming third in the Games. Apart from taking part in the competition, the team, with the assistance of local Chinese groups in Sheffield, had also held a “Next City Host Night”, a publicity campaign for the 2006 9<sup>th</sup> WFG to be held in Hong Kong. It had received favourable feedback from overseas teams and some of them had expressed that they would participate in the Games. Publicity leaflets were distributed during the meeting for members’ reference. Moreover, preparations for the event were under way. Press conference would be held on 24 September this year to introduce the arrangements of the next Games. Staging an international competition would not only provide an opportunity for the Department to exchange experience with counterparts from all over the world but would also attract more tourists and boost the local economy.

## **7. Despatching Ambulances in Order of Priority**

- 7.1 Members were informed that the preliminary procedure of the tendering exercise had been completed. However, the results had exceeded the Departmental budget. The Department was now planning to invite suitable consultants to give quotations by “Invitation to Quotation”.

## **8. Performance Pledge of the Fire Services Department**

- 8.1 Leaflets on the “2004 Performance Pledge” were distributed to members in the meeting for their reference and the Pledge had been uploaded onto the FSD homepage. Leaflets were also available to the public in District Offices.

**9. Review and Improvement Plan on False Fire and Ambulance Calls and Delayed Responses**

9.1 The Department expressed that a series of measures had been adopted to deploy ambulance resources more flexibly, with a view to improving the response time performance. The measures adopted included introducing staggered shift system in 17 ambulance depots to cope with the large number of ambulance calls during peak hours from the afternoon to the evening. Moreover, an ambulance fleet comprising 12 two-man crew ambulances had been designated to provide inter-hospital transfer service for patients in relatively critical condition so as to release manpower for emergency ambulance calls.

9.2 The meeting agreed to delete this item from the agenda of the next meeting.

**10. Departmental Expenses of the Fire Services Department**

10.1 The meeting agreed to delete this item from the agenda of the next meeting.

**11. Development and Implementation of Paramedic Service**

11.1 Members were informed that the implementation of the paramedic ambulance service was in good progress. The meeting agreed to defer discussion of this issue until early next year.

**12. Change of Fire Services Department's Web Site Address**

12.1 The meeting agreed to delete this item from the agenda of the next meeting.

**13. Fire Services Statistics**

13.1 The meeting agreed to delete this item from the agenda of the next meeting.

**14. Making the Best Use of Community Resources to Promote Fire Protection, Calamity Prevention and Hazard Abatement**

14.1 Members were informed that the Department had studied in detail the suggestions on the activities and publicity of the Fire Safety Ambassador (FSA) Scheme, and would set up District Fire Safety Ambassador Activities Promotion Committees (DFSAMC) to be chaired by Divisional Commanders in the 18 districts throughout the territory. Moreover, the Fire Safety Ambassador Honorary President Scheme would be

introduced and district dignitaries would be appointed as FSA Honorary Presidents, aiming to gather all FSAs in the districts together through activities and publicity campaigns. It was hoped that the new arrangement would promote the FSA Scheme more directly on the district level and further increase the public awareness of fire safety.

**15. Progress of Preparation for the Fire Safety Exhibition Hall**

- 15.1 The Department indicated that advice was being sought from other departments with regard to future operating expenses and manpower arrangements for the Fire Safety Exhibition Hall, with a view to further examining the future financial and operational arrangements with the developer. Specific details had yet to be ascertained. If the collaborative scheme was to be implemented, the Department might consider asking retired members to manage the Exhibition Hall as volunteers when necessary in view of the current manpower shortage and difficulty to release staff for premises management.

**16. Civilianization Study**

- 16.1 The meeting was informed that the Efficiency Unit had completed the final report on civilianization study. The Department would submit the proposed implementation plan to the Security Bureau and follow up the relevant arrangements. Members agreed to delete this item from the agenda of the next meeting.

**17. Customer Service Contest**

- 17.1 Members noted that in the *Customer Service Award Scheme* organized by the Civil Service Bureau, the Department had won the Gold Award of the *Best Public Image Award* and the Merit Award of the *Department Award*. At the presentation ceremony telecasted by TVB Jade on 30 May this year, the Director and Deputy Director received the two awards in person on behalf of the Department. Such remarkable achievements were attributable to the efforts and cooperation from the staff as well as the continuous support and encouragement from the public.

**18. Publicity Leaflets and Posters**

- 18.1 The Department stated that the quantity of publicity materials would be determined according to the actual requirement. Members agreed to delete this item from the agenda of the next meeting.

## **19. Abuse of Ambulance Service**

- 19.1 The meeting was told that a member wished to know how the Department could, with limited resources, effectively reduce (1) the number of cases of abuse of ambulance service; and (2) the number of unwanted alarms caused by automatic fire alarm systems. The member hoped that the Department could provide relevant statistics for members' discussion. The member also suggested that a mechanism should be set up by the Management Group, the Fire Protection Commands and the Prosecution Section, etc., to monitor and review the situation, so that citizens in genuine need of fire and ambulance services would not be affected. He also hoped that this could avoid wasting precious human resources and alleviate the pressure and heavy workload of frontline staff at the same time.
- 19.2 The Department said that it had an established mechanism to monitor the abuse of ambulance service. To put this simply, if an ambulance staff reasonably suspected that the ambulance service was used by someone without really needing it, e.g. someone might use an ambulance for non-medical purpose, then the officer-in-charge of the ambulance would submit a report with recommendations of measures to be taken to his unit commander for initiation of investigation. The Department encouraged officers-in-charge of ambulances to report suspected incidents of abuse of service, but at the same time reminded them to provide ambulance service and care to patients without delay when necessary. The Department further claimed that this monitoring system was effective and the abuse of ambulance service was not serious. From the year 2001 onwards, there had been only 5 reported cases of suspected abuse of ambulances. There were 3 cases in 2001 and 2 cases in 2002. In response to a member's enquiry, the Department stated that the investigation revealed that some of the abuse cases were caused by misunderstanding of the duties of the emergency ambulances on the part of the police and hospital staff. For example, there had been a case in which the police called two ambulances to transport separately the two alleged persons in a fight. Subsequently, the Department informed the police that under such circumstances, the two alleged persons could share the same ambulance when accompanied by a police officer. In addition, some medical staff had also called ambulances to deal with non-urgent removal cases. After discussing the matter with the departments concerned and explaining to them the proper way of using ambulance service, there had not been a case of misuse of the ambulance.

**20. Unwanted Alarms of Automatic Fire Alarm Systems**

20.1 Members were briefed that unwanted alarms of automatic fire alarm systems had continued to decrease over the past three years. The relevant figures were as follows:

	Year 2002 (from January to July)	Year 2003 (from January to July)	Year 2004 (from January to July)
Cases of unwanted alarms of automatic fire alarm systems	16 974	15 189	13 421

The Department further expressed that it would continue to monitor and review such cases, with a view to utilizing resources effectively. For the first seven months this year, the number of such cases decreased by about 12% when compared with the corresponding period last year. This illustrated the effective results after implementing the following improvement measures:

- a) Revising the installation standards of fire detection systems for elderly housing and small-sized unit buildings.
- b) Setting out clearly the requirements for installation of smoke detectors in university dormitories.
- c) Application by property owners and management companies to change the fire service installations, such as replacing a smoke detector with a heat detector in the engine room.
- d) Time Related System as announced in the *FSD Circular Letter No. 4/2001*.
- e) Introduction of advanced and sophisticated detectors, e.g. systems giving off fire alarm signals only when smoke and heat were both detected.

20.2 A member said that the sprinkler head of the automatic sprinkler system in a sauna parlour bursted accidentally that day. And the fire control room concerned immediately telephoned *Chubbs* to suspend the system temporarily, but it did not inform the Department to deploy fire appliances to the scene. He quoted the above incident to enquire whether such practice could effectively reduce unwanted alarms of automatic fire alarm systems and turnouts of fire personnel. The Department explained that automatic sprinkler systems were different from automatic fire alarm systems. The former were temperature-sensing devices which were fairly reliable from the standpoint of fire safety engineering, while the latter were smoke detection devices which were more easily affected by the external environment (e.g. dust).

For the time being, management companies could reduce unwanted alarms by temporarily suspending the systems under foreseeable circumstances e.g. during carrying out maintenance works, but this should be taken as a temporary arrangement only. However, only those property management companies that have a reliable and good management record should adopt the above practice. The Department further indicated that the fire personnel had to arrive at the scene under such circumstances according to current legislation and that the bursting of sprinkler heads might have been caused by fire, therefore fire personnel had the responsibility to attend to such cases.

- 20.3 A member enquired whether authorized persons could freely altered smoke detectors, such as adding delayed alarm switches. The Department replied that any alterations to fire safety installations had to comply with the current conditions stipulated in circular letters and obtain prior approval from the Department.
- 20.4 A member considered that the Department had to face up to the problem of unwanted alarms of automatic fire alarm systems. He enquired the average time currently required for handling an unwanted alarm case and whether the responsible persons of properties with repeated unwanted alarms would be penalized. If there was no provision on penalties, then the Department had to strengthen civic education to avoid wastage of social resources. The Department thanked the member for the above opinion, and expressed that unwanted alarms of automatic fire alarm systems had always been the concern of the Department and a series of preventive and improvement measures had been drawn up with a view to minimizing unwanted alarms. However, automatic fire alarm systems were vulnerable to environmental influences. Thunder, humidity, unstable voltage, etc., could all lead to unwanted alarms. Therefore, the Department could not easily dismiss an alarm as an unwanted alarm and allow its staff to arrive late at the scene. The Department further said that it was contradictory to penalize property owners for unwanted alarms because automatic fire alarm systems were installed in buildings according to requirements of the existing code. According to the existing legislation, the Department did not have the authority to penalize property owners for unwanted alarms. Therefore, when the staff of operational commands found that there were repeated unwanted alarms from individual properties, they would inform colleagues of the Fire Safety Command. And the latter would contact the responsible persons of these properties to discuss ways for reducing unwanted alarms. The Department added that it would be notified instantly through automatic fire alarm systems in the event of fire, hence the fire personnel usually learned of a fire outbreak before property attendants did.

20.5 A member suggested that the Department follow the practice of the police, i.e. fire calls had to be confirmed as genuine by an intermediary organization before being referred to the Department. In addition, the Department could set up corresponding response time categories in accordance with figures of unwanted alarms in the past. The Department thanked the member for the suggestion and explained that theft and fire incidents were different in nature. If fire fighting was delayed in the event of fire, the loss of lives and property would be immeasurable. Moreover, it would be difficult to set standards for extended response time. Due to the possible grave consequences, the fire personnel had to arrive at the scene without any delay upon receiving a report of fire.

20.6 A member queried whether the design of smoke detectors was obsolete, thus requiring replacement. The Department pointed out that the features of some of the old smoke detectors were not as comprehensive as the new models, but they could still operate effectively. If smoke detectors were found inoperative during inspection, the fire personnel would issue a Fire Hazard Abatement Notice to the responsible person of the property and required that detectors be replaced. The Department would also discuss ways for reduction of unwanted alarms when necessary with the responsible persons, who were willing to cooperate with the Department in general.

**21. A Senior Fireman Losing His Life in Saving a Worker Who Had Fallen into a Manhole**

21.1 The Department remarked that a PLG member would like to know if there was a special cause for the death of a senior fireman who entered a manhole to rescue a worker, and asked whether the senior fireman had worn a face mask (breathing apparatus) before entering the manhole. The Department replied that on 7 July this year, a senior fireman had unfortunately lost his life in saving a person who had fallen into a manhole at the basement of Smiling Shau Kei Wan Plaza. The Department had set up a special investigation panel to conduct a detailed investigation, and the police and the Labour Department were at present investigating the incident. Since the case involved another person who had also died in the incident, it was believed that eventually an inquest would be held by a coroner. The Department added that there were established guidelines for rescue operations in a sewage drain, while lectures and exercises would be arranged from time to time to familiarize members with these guidelines. The Department had also provided sufficient protective clothing and breathing apparatus for members. Since the case was still under investigation, it was not convenient for the Department to give comments at this stage. The Department thanked the PLG member for expressing concern about the incident.



## **22 Disinfecting Arrangements for Ambulances and Ambulance Personnel**

- 22.1 The Department remarked that a PLG member asked whether it was necessary to disinfect the ambulance with a 1:49 diluted bleach solution after conveying a feverish patient. The PLG member also indicated that the ambulance personnel might not be able to wash their hands immediately every time after handling the casualty, and therefore asked the Department whether sterile tissue paper was provided for the ambulance personnel.
- 22.2 The Department explained to the meeting that there were established procedures for the disinfection of ambulances. Ambulances that had conveyed patients who "passed away before hospitalization", or were "suspected or confirmed to have contracted an infectious disease", etc., had to go to the nearest ambulance depot for disinfection. All equipment on board and the inside of the vehicle should be disinfected by disinfectants. As the disinfecting procedure took time, the ambulance service would be affected if too many ambulances required disinfection; therefore, the Department had to strike a balance. According to the medical consultant, "fever" was only one of the possible symptoms of an infectious disease. Therefore, in deciding whether an ambulance required disinfection, other risk factors (e.g. whether warning signs of SARS existed, and whether the patient had visited infected cities or made contact with other persons suffering from infectious diseases) should also be taken into account. Furthermore, the ambulance personnel who were at the hospital after handling a case could use the hospital facilities to wash their hands. At present, each ambulance was also equipped with "Spiriclens" spray disinfectant for the ambulance personnel to disinfect their hands in case water was not available.

## **23. Fire Safety (Buildings) Ordinance (Chapter 572)**

- 23.1 The Department remarked that a PLG member enquired about the implementation date of the Building Safety (Buildings) Ordinance, Chapter 572, Laws of Hong Kong. He also suggested that the Department conduct large-scale fire safety promotion activities to publicise the improvement of the fire service installations of residential and industrial buildings, as well as commercial or composite commercial/residential buildings, and let the public understand the division of labour among the Buildings Department, the Fire Services Department and the Water Supplies Department.
- 23.2 The Department informed the meeting that after the Fire Safety (Buildings) Ordinance had come into force, many old buildings would then be required to improve their fire service installations and equipment, and the owners or occupants of these buildings might need to raise funds for the works. As such, when the Fire Safety (Buildings)

Ordinance was passed by the Legco in 2002, the Legco made it clear that the Ordinance should not be implemented immediately upon its passage. In that year, the Home Affairs Bureau had also prepared the Building Management Ordinance, and according to this amending Ordinance, the Incorporated Owners had the right to represent missing or irresponsible owners to apply for a loan under the Building Safety Loan Scheme set up by the government. Therefore, the Fire Safety (Buildings) Ordinance could not come into force until after the Building Management Ordinance was amended.

- 23.3 The Department remarked that from this year onwards, in order to deliver the fire safety message to the public, the enforcement authorities of the Fire Safety (Buildings) Ordinance, i.e. the Buildings Department and the Fire Services Department, had been advising building owners that they should consider enhancing the fire service installations and equipment while the renovation and maintenance of their buildings were carried out. Such advice was given in the form of a rectification proposal. The target of the two Departments was to inspect 900 buildings a year. A PLG member would like to know more details about the significance of enacting the Fire Safety (Buildings) Ordinance and the Fire Services Ordinance. The Department replied that according to the Fire Services Ordinance, if the fire service equipment of a building was not properly maintained, had been damaged or could not function properly, the Fire Services Department had to issue a Fire Hazard Abatement Notice to the responsible person, requiring the responsible person to improve the fire service equipment and ensure its proper functioning. The Fire Safety (Buildings) Ordinance, however, only applied to buildings constructed on or before 1 March 1987. The Department further explained that the fire service standard at the time when many old buildings were completed had now become outdated; however, according to the Fire Services Ordinance, as long as the fire service regulations in force at that time were not breached, the Fire Services Department could not request the responsible person to enhance the standard of the fire service installations and equipment. Therefore, the government had to draw up new legislation to enhance the fire safety standard of old buildings, and the Department would pay close attention to the amendment progress of the Building (Management) Regulations. The PLG member hoped that the Fire Safety (Buildings) Ordinance could be implemented as soon as possible, and enquired why the Building (Management) Regulations had still not been amended after so many years. The Department indicated that the amendment exercise was undertaken by the Home Affairs Bureau, and believed that the Bureau would complete the exercise as soon as possible.

- 23.4 A PLG member indicated that as an authorized person, he had also advised the responsible persons of premises to improve the fire service installations. However, because the Fire Safety (Buildings) Ordinance had not yet come into force, the response of many responsible persons were lukewarm. The Department thanked the member for making efforts to promote fire safety, and indicated that the Fire Services Department and the Buildings Department would continue to advise the owners of old buildings to make improvement.
- 23.5 The Department informed the meeting that the theme of this year's fire prevention campaign was "改善防火設施，共享安全環境" ("Upgrade Fire Safety Measures and Enjoy a Safe Environment"). The campaign would be held from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on 5 December 2004 (Sunday) at the plaza of Kowloon Park. The Department would invite PLG members to participate in the campaign in due course.

#### **24. Performance Pledge of Fire Services Department**

- 24.1 The Department informed the meeting that a PLG member would like to compare the performance indicators of various services of the Department for the year 2004 with the latest data on actual performance, so as to identify areas for improvement.
- 24.2 The Department indicated that there was a great demand for the ambulance service, and then explained to the meeting by citing information on the performance of the ambulance service. He said that reference had been made to international standards in setting the current target of 12-minute response time for the ambulance service. The pledged performance indicator of 92.5%, which had been approved by the Exco and Legco, was set in 1998, taking account of factors like the demand for ambulance service, ambulance resources and the capability of the mobilizing system at that time. As regards the performance pledge for the ambulance service, 93.2% of emergency ambulance calls received in 2003 were handled within a response time of 12 minutes, which was 1.44% higher than that of 2002, and 0.7% above the performance indicator of 92.5%. As the demand for the ambulance service rose sharply after the SARS crisis, the figure for the first eight months of 2004 was 11% more than that recorded in the same period of 2003, and therefore during that period, the average monthly performance indicator stood at 91.17%, which was 1.33% lower than the pledged indicator of 92.5%. As regards improvement measures for the ambulance service, the Department was planning to increase the number of staggered shift ambulances. Moreover, the Department had established an urgent care fleet to take up hospital transfer cases, and had sought assistance from St. John Ambulance Brigade to help handle some of the non-emergency cases. The Department also planned to commission a consultant to study the priority deployment of ambulances, and to

enhance deployment efficiency by making use of the Third Generation Mobilizing System which would come into operation soon.

- 24.3 The PLG member thanked the Department for the detailed explanation. The member thought the statistics revealed that the Department had met the pledged performance target. To increase the transparency of the Department, the statistics should also be uploaded onto the Department's web page. Furthermore, the management should pool ideas and draw up an overall strategic plan to facilitate the effective use of resources. He also remarked that recently, the Department's image was affected by a series of news about fire service members, such as dying in the course of performing duties and involvement in pecuniary disputes. He hoped the Department could explore ways to improve the situation. The Department thanked the member for his views, and welcomed other PLG members to bring up any issue for discussion. The Department added that the existing statistics would be uploaded onto the Department's web page, so as to increase the transparency of the Department as far as possible. The Legco would also monitor the utilization of resources by the Department, and the Director of Fire Services was required to attend the Special Finance Committee Meeting every year to answer Legco members' questions on this subject. Furthermore, the Department would frequently formulate overall strategies such as the priority deployment of ambulances.
- 24.4 A PLG member remarked that her home was in the vicinity of an ambulance depot, and the ambulance personnel of that depot attended to ambulance calls for an average of 6 to 7 times every night. She considered that the workload of the ambulance personnel was very heavy, and their performance was very good. She predicted that as public awareness of fire prevention continued to increase, the attendance frequency of the fire personnel would be lower when compared with that of the ambulance personnel. She considered that insufficient manning for the ambulance service was due to limited resources of the government, and that the Department had made every effort to provide the best service for the public.
- 24.5 A PLG member remarked that the ambulances outnumbered the ambulance personnel, but the number of fire personnel and that of ambulance personnel being recruited were more or less the same. It seemed that there was an uneven distribution of resources. Regarding the issue of resource distribution, the Department explained to the meeting that if the Department planned to build a new fire station in a newly developed area, the Department would conduct a risk assessment before deciding on the number of fire appliances required. The response time for the fire appliance would vary with the fire risk level of a particular area (see the chart below).

Local fire risk level	Graded response time	Fire appliances required
A	6 minutes	1 hydraulic platform 1 major pump 1 light rescue unit
B	6 minutes	1 hydraulic platform 1 light rescue unit
C	9 minutes	1 hydraulic platform
D	15 minutes	2 light pumping appliances
E	23 minutes	as necessary

Regarding ambulances, they should arrive at the scene within 12 minutes, including 2-minute activation time and 10-minute travelling time. Moreover, if the fire or ambulance service in some of the developed urban areas or rural districts was inadequate, the Department would apply to the government for funds to build more fire stations or ambulance depots, such as the Braemar Hill Fire Station cum Ambulance Depot and the Kowloon Tong Fire Station cum Ambulance Depot, which would come into operation soon.

- 24.6 A PLG member would like to know the reason why ambulances needed to handle cross-district cases frequently. The Department indicated that because of the high mobility of ambulances, it was possible for the fire control and mobilization centre to deploy available ambulances nearest to the scene to handle cross-district cases. In fact, the situation was not very serious. Furthermore, in response to the PLG member's enquiry about the issue of "out-station" (i.e. ambulances being deployed to fire stations), the Department indicated that there was no fixed pattern as to when and where an ambulance call was made. Besides referring to previous statistics, it was necessary to identify strategic locations when deciding where to station an ambulance. The "out-station" was one mode of deploying ambulances. According to a past consultancy study commissioned by the Department, in the short term, it might not be necessary to establish an ambulance depot in some strategic locations, and the Department could just deploy ambulances to fire stations in the vicinity.
- 24.7 The Department thanked PLG members for their compliments to the ambulance personnel and their concern about ambulance resources. The Department added that the decision on resource allocation lied with the government. The ambulance personnel had to handle an average of 5 to 6 ambulance calls per shift. In view of their heavy workload, the management of the Department would hold regular meetings with the representatives of their union to enhance communication and discuss ways of improving the working conditions of the ambulance personnel, such as the current trial scheme of advancing the time for lunch.

## **25. Equipment on Fire Appliances**

25.1 The Department stated that a member suggested putting portable equipment, such as lightweight oxygen cylinders and masks, beside fire-fighter seats on fire appliances. He considered that the placement of equipment, like lightweight oxygen cylinders and fire extinguishers, would enable the fire personnel to commence operation immediately on arrival at the scene. Besides, the Department could study the modification of fire appliances to facilitate fire fighters' access to tools on the way to the scene. The Department thanked the member for his advice and expressed that fire extinguishers and light rescue tools were placed beside the seats on each fire appliance for use by the frontline personnel. In addition, each Mobile Command Unit had a lightweight oxygen cylinder which could be used for 10 to 20 consecutive minutes. The cylinders were mainly provided for supervisors to conduct fire ground inspection for a short period of time. Moreover, with regard to the fire appliances of the Airport Fire Contingent and the batch of Light Rescue Units newly procured last year, breathing apparatuses were put at the back of the seats. The Department would continue to monitor closely the effectiveness of such measures.

## **26. Examination of Fire Service Installations inside Buildings of the Housing Department**

26.1 According to the Department, a member suggested the Department take the initiative to examine the fire service installations inside buildings constructed by the Housing Department. The Department explained that it was the duty of structural surveyors and architects of the Housing Department to ensure that the facilities and specifications of its buildings complied with prevailing legal requirements at the time of construction. But fire service installations of buildings were still inspected and approved by the Department.

26.2 Members noted that the Housing Department was allocated 400 million dollars in 2002 for the replacement of main doors at about 150 000 unidirectional units of public housing estates and Tenants Purchase Scheme located at the ends of corridors in order to comply with current requirements of the building regulations. The plan had to be implemented by phases because a large number of units was involved. Regarding the inward-opening design of metal gates, it was the jurisdiction of the Housing Department. After clarifying with the Housing Department, such design was found in compliance with the specifications set out in paragraph 16.1 of the Code of Practice for the Provision of Means of Escape in Case of Fire, which meant that only units accommodating more than 30 persons were required to have the main door opening outwards. The Department added that regular meetings were held with the Housing

Department to discuss matters on the fire safety of public housing estates.

**VI. Any Other Business**

**27. Fire Safety Improvement Direction**

27.1 The Department thanked a PLG member for making recommendations earlier on the issue of fire safety improvement direction. The recommendations had been referred to the Fire Safety Command for consideration and follow-up.

**28. The 12<sup>th</sup> Fire Services Department Public Liaison Group**

28.1 The Department informed the meeting that application for membership of the 12th Fire Services Department Public Liaison Group would be accepted early next year. The Group would be composed of serving members and new members. The number of seats reserved for serving members should not exceed 15, i.e. there would be no more than 5 seats for each district. Upon expiry of their first term of **one year**, serving members might apply for re-appointment if they were invited by the Director of Fire Services, but they could not serve more than two years. The remaining seats would be reserved for new members. If new applications outnumbered the vacant seats, members would be selected by a random draw.

28.2 A PLG member suggested that the Department organize first aid courses for the PLG and provide uniforms for PLG members. The Department thanked the PLG member for the suggestion, and indicated that the Department would consider organizing cardiopulmonary resuscitation courses for PLG members, and study the suggestion on uniform.

28.3 A PLG member remarked that in July this year, he served as a guide for overseas visitors to fire stations and ambulance depot, and the dedication of the fire and ambulance personnel was greatly appreciated by the visitors. Moreover, he had submitted 42 Fire Safety Ambassador application forms to the Kwai Chung Fire Station, but there was no response so far. The Department thanked the PLG member and his friends for their support and encouragement rendered to the Department, and indicated that the Department would continue to promote the Fire Safety Ambassador Scheme, and appoint an officer to follow up the applications he mentioned. (Post-meeting note: after the meeting, the staff of the Community Relations Division looked up the record of Fire Safety Ambassador application, but could not trace the application. To clarify the situation, the officer-in-charge phoned the PLG member, who replied that perhaps his colleagues had not despatched the application forms.

He would follow up and would re-apply if necessary, and indicated that he was very satisfied with the prompt action taken by the staff of the Community Relations Division.)

29. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Fire Services Department

October 2004