

The 12th Fire Services Department Public Liaison Group
Notes of the Second Meeting

The second meeting of the 12th Fire Services Department Public Liaison Group (PLG) was held at the multi-purpose hall, G/F., Fire Services Headquarters Building on 21th October 2005 at 6:30 p.m.

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Opening Remarks

The Department welcomed all members to the second meeting of the 12th PLG, and introduced 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 The Department informed the meeting that the Department had invited members to participate in the following activities since the last meeting:

Date	Name of activity
4.9.2005	Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Toughest Firefighter Alive cum Fire Services Open Day
5.9.2005	Opening Ceremony of Penny's Bay Fire Station-cum-Ambulance Depot
22.9.2005	Inter-departmental Vegetation Fire-cum-Mountain Rescue Exercise 2005
30.9.2005	Hillfire Prevention and Wetland Protection Day

Besides, the Secretariat of PLG had taken up the responsibility of co-ordination work on inviting members to Fire Station/Ambulance Depot Open Days. Members would be invited via e-mail to attend the Open Days, and those without an e-mail account would be informed by mail. They would also be invited to the following activities later:

Date	Name of activity
13.11.2005	Fire Prevention Campaign Launching Ceremony 2005-2006 (Venue: Shatin Town Hall Plaza)
10.11.2005	Ambulance Service Campaign 2005 (Venue: Olympian City II)
2.12.2005	Passing Out Parade cum Director's Farewell Parade (Venue: Shatin Fire Station)

- 3.2 A member said that some members had not received the invitation letter to attend the Opening Ceremony of Penny's Bay Fire Station-cum-Ambulance Depot. Besides, on the Hillfire Prevention and Wetland Protection Day, the member said that some participants had reflected that the Wan Chai DFSAMC members had not been given a seat because they had not registered at the reception, and thus blamed the fireman who volunteered to help out at the event. That member suggested that the Department should reinforce the co-ordination when organizing such activities to avoid similar incidents from happening again. Another member said he had made an enquiry to the Secretariat and learnt that it was an easy walk to the Penny's Bay Fire Station, but it actually took him 20 minutes to reach the Station on foot. The member hoped that the Department could enhance the arrangement for the coming activities so that similar incidents would not happen again. The Department thanked the two members for their opinions, and said that the Department would try to make improvements in this respect. The Department further explained that rows of seats were usually assigned for guests in such activities, and individual guest would not be assigned a specific seat. A third member reminded members to be punctual for activities.

(Post-meeting note: The Department had sent invitation letters to 30 members of PLG and phoned them up a couple of days before the Ceremony. However, some of the members could not be reached either because they had not provided their telephone numbers or there was no one answering the call.)

4. World Firefighters Games (WFG)

- 4.1 The Department informed the meeting that preparations for the Games were under way and publicity materials had been sent to the fire-fighting bodies of over 90 areas. Applications were coming in and the Department welcomed PLG members to serve as volunteer helpers for the event.

5. Priority Despatch System

- 5.1 The Department informed the meeting that the consultant of the Priority Despatch System had already reported the contents of the final report to the representatives of Security Bureau, FSD and Hospital Authority etc. The Department planned to

hold a press conference at the end of November 2005 and a wide consultation on the recommendations of the final report would follow.

6. Performance Pledge of FSD

- 6.1 The Department indicated that the response time performance for fire calls and ambulance calls in September this year were 87.18% and 91.05% respectively, both of which could not meet the performance pledge of 92.5%. The slide in the response time performance during the early stage of introducing the TGMS was within the expectation of the Department but the performance was steadily improving. A member hoped that the Department would provide the response time for every 2 or 4 hour time slot but not an average response time at the next meeting, because this would show whether the Government had enough resources to cope with the demand for ambulance service during different time slots. The Department would study the feasibility of providing the above data and would report the result at the next meeting.
- 6.2 In response to a member's enquiry, the Department replied that various reasons for the slide of the response time performance had been studied. The main reason was the need to improve the hardware and software of the TGMS. Besides, since the TGMS was using different land planning zones to categorize the risks, which led to a higher requirement of response time for some districts, therefore the recent performance could not meet the pledge. The Department hoped that the response time performance would improve by enhancing the work flow.
- 6.3 A member said the performance pledges for fire calls and ambulance calls were different. Although ambulance calls account for the majority of all the calls, ambulance resources were limited. The member wanted to know how the Department maintained a balance to reduce the work pressure of the staff. The Department said that the duty systems and requirements for response time, as well as calculation methods for the fire and ambulance personnel were different. The Department expected that the response time performance would continue to improve along with the enhancement of the TGMS.
- 6.4 A member hoped that FSD would maintain the excellent performance standard it had been keeping since the handover. The member's overseas friends had high regard for Hong Kong's fire services, and he suggested that the Department should arrange more activities for the PLG. The Department thanked the member for the compliments and would carefully consider the suggestion.

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

- 7.1 The Department stated that 8 FSA Honorary President's Associations had been established in the following districts:
 Kowloon : Yau Tsim Mong, Wong Tai Sin, Sham Shui Po, Kwun Tong and Kowloon City
 New Territories : Shatin and Northern District
 Hong Kong Island : Wanchai
- 7.2 The Department said that a member raised a question via email: "Please tell the meeting the selection criteria of FSA Honorary President and District Fire Safety Ambassador Management Committee (DFSAMC), namely the objectives, qualifications, tenure, job nature and amount of sponsorship. Does the Department have any plan to disclose the criteria to all FSAs?" The Department explained to the meeting that the Department would appoint local dignitaries and persons who were enthusiastic about the district affairs as FSA Honorary Presidents. The tenure was one year. Three or more HPs were sufficed to establish an HP Association. Normally, the ratio of HP to FSA was 1:500 but it could be adjusted depending on the distribution of FSAs. Besides, DFSAMCs had been established to manage the affairs of FSA in each district. Divisional Commander/Assistant Divisional Commander would take up the post of Committee's Chairman, while Assistant Divisional Officer and Senior Station Officer would be Deputy Chairman and Secretary respectively. The Committee Chairman would appoint enthusiastic FSAs of the district as members. The schemes concerning DFSAMC and FSA Honorary President Association had been published in Issue No. 1 of 2005 FSA Newsletter, which was put on the table for members' reference.
- 7.3 The Department said that a member proposed a review on the Award Scheme for FSA via email. The member had discussions about this with the Chief Fire Officer of FS Command and Community Relations Section several months ago. The member also asked whether there were any plans to call for an overall review of the Merit Point System, to send out questionnaires concerning the FSA Award Scheme and to improve the Scheme. The Department said that the objectives of the Award Scheme for FSA were to commend FSAs for participating in fire safety activities and assisting FSD in disseminating fire safety messages to the public, and to recognize FSAs for their outstanding achievement in assisting FSD in promoting a fire safety culture in the community. Twelve categories of services were used to calculate merit points and the period of calculation was from October of each year to September next year. The leaflets on "Award Scheme for FSA" were put on the table for members' reference. The Award Scheme Board would review the

Scheme in October each year. In the meeting held on 7 October this year, the Board had decided to set up a team to review the Award Scheme and the team had already been set up. If the Department decided to amend the Award Scheme, it would consult FSAs' opinions through the web page and Newsletter of FSA.

- 7.4 The Department said that a member raised another question via email: "Why are there commercial advertisements in Elite and the FSA Newsletter?" The Department continued that the "Welfare Section Notice" published in Elite and the FSA Newsletters were not commercial advertisements. According to an agreement between the company and the Department, FSD personnel and FSAs could purchase certain commodities at concessionary prices and part of the revenue would be contributed to the FSD Welfare Fund. In return, the Department would publish these special offers in the "Welfare Section Notice" of the above publications.
- 7.5 A member said she was an FSA of Kowloon South District but had not received any news about the establishment of the DFSAMC and other activities of the district. The member did not understand why she had not received any information about FSA in the past year. She opined that there was room for improvement in the management of FSA. She also thought that it was not appropriate to invite only a small portion of FSAs to visit the navy vessel HMS York. The Department said that the colleague responsible for the above activity had to make the arrangement within a very short period of time, and therefore he could only invite members through the Operational Commands. If there was enough time, the Department would normally publish information on any activity through the web page and newsletters of FSA. If there was not enough time, FSAs would be contacted directly through the Operational Commands. The Department thanked the member for her opinions, and said that due to time and budget constraints, FSAs might be contacted by telephone instead of email if necessary. The Department would also ask DFSAMCs to enhance the communication with FSAs. In reply to the member's question, the Department said that FSAs could apply for changing membership to another district in writing.
- 7.6 A member said that since reporting of fire hazard would be awarded 4 points and up to a maximum of 100 points could be awarded under the Merit Point System, the member was concerned that this might cause a lot of nuisance to the Fire Services Communication Centre(FSCC). The Department thanked the member for the opinion and would forward the suggestion to the Community Relations Section, which would be pleased to consider her suggestion. That member continued that she had contributed an article to the FSA Newsletter before but it was not published until one year later because of limited space in the Newsletter. She suggested that

the notices of Welfare Section should be uploaded to the web page of FSA to make room for other information/articles. The Department said he would forward her suggestion to the editorial board of FSA Newsletter for follow-up.

- 7.7 A member hoped the FSA Scheme, like the Junior Police Call, would be funded by the government for territory-wide implementation, instead of being solely sponsored by Honorary Presidents. The Department replied that the FSA Scheme was funded by the government. But with the introduction of the Honorary President Scheme, the Department could obtain more community resources to organize activities and the honorary presidents were particularly committed to the activities of their districts. The Department indicated that the FSA Scheme was similar to the Junior Police Call in this respect.

8. The 12th Fire Services Department Public Liaison Group

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

9. Recruitment Arrangement

- 9.1 The Department stated that a member had raised the following issue in email: "It is heard that the FSD has recruitment plans for the posts of Station Officer (Operational) and Ambulance Officer. This is good news for the operational staff. Please inform the PLG members about the number of vacancies of the posts. Does the Department have any recruitment plan for Senior Fireman/ Firewoman (Control)? When compared with Police Control and Command Centre, it seems that the manpower of the FSCC is a bit tight." The Department replied that the Department was given approval to open recruit 266 members this year. On 6 June and 12 September this year, the Department had respectively recruited 9 and 15 Station Officers. In addition, 10 Senior Fireman/ Firewoman (Control) were appointed internally on 12 September. There was no vacancy for the Ambulance Officer grade at present. The Department hoped that approval for open recruitment could be obtained again next year.

10. Fire Station Open Day

- 10.1 The contents of discussion of this item were recorded in paragraph 3. Members agreed to delete this item from the agenda of the next meeting.

11. Logistic Support Appliance

- 11.1 This item was fully reported in the last meeting and members agreed to delete this

item from the agenda of the next meeting.

12. **Ambulance Generator**

- 12.1 This item was fully reported in the last meeting and members agreed to delete this item from the agenda of the next meeting.

13. **Application Procedures for Places of Public Entertainment Licence and Restaurant**

- 13.1 This item was fully reported in the last meeting and members agreed to delete this item from the agenda of the next meeting.

New Items

14. **Arrangements for Rescue Operation**

- 14.1 The Department informed the meeting that a member had raised the following question via email: “At about 8:16 p.m. on 21 June, a male elderly lost consciousness at home in Siu On Court, Tuen Mun because of suspected heart attack. His family called for emergency service but as all ambulances of that district were already deployed, the FSCC therefore mobilized Tuen Mun/ Major Rescue Unit (TM/ MRU) to provide First Responder service. An ambulance and an ambulance aid motorcycle (AAMC) were also despatched from Lau Fau Shan Ambulance Depot at once. Later, however, TM/ MRU could not proceed to the scene because of traffic accident and the AAMC could not respond to the call to provide rescue service due to rainy weather. The FSCC then despatched Ambulance A148 from Castle Peak Bay to the scene. Finally, the ambulance reached the scene in 16 minutes after the call was received. Unfortunately, the male elderly passed away after he was conveyed to the hospital.” The questions raised by that member and the replies from the Department were listed below:

Question 1: As the scene of incident was located at Castle Peak Bay District 2, for what reasons TM/ MRU was despatched instead of Castle Peak Bay/ Light Rescue Unit?

Reply 1: After receiving the emergency ambulance call that day from Ting Yin House, Siu On Court, Tuen Mun, the FSCC mobilized an AAMC from Tuen Mun Ambulance Depot and despatched the nearest available Ambulance A353 from Lau Fau Shan to the scene at once. In view of the nature of the call and the time required for an

ambulance to reach the scene, a First Responder should be deployed to the scene. However, as the First Responder of Castle Peak Bay Fire Station was handling another call at that time, the FSCC therefore despatched the First Responder of Tuen Mun Fire Station to the scene.

Question 2: TM/ MRU could not proceed to the scene because of traffic accident, but it was reported that the MRU was only slightly hit at the rear by a private car and it could still proceed to the scene after the accident. Did all FSD vehicles actually have to cease their operation to assist with investigation when they were involved in minor traffic accidents? For this incident, could one or two firemen stay behind to assist with investigation while other crew members continued to proceed to the scene of incident to provide rescue service and returned to the scene of accident later to assist with investigation? Moreover, could the Oic onboard decide whether to follow the guidelines according to the circumstances in each case?

Reply 2: The Department indicated that according to FSGO, when an FSD vehicle was despatched to take part in rescue service but involved in a traffic accident on the way to the scene, the Oic of the vehicle could make an appropriate decision according to the circumstances, e.g. making arrangements for one member to stay at the scene of accident to assist with investigation while other crew members went on to carry out their duties. As the FSCC managed to despatch another ambulance from Tuen Mun Hospital to Siu On Court, Tuen Mun to handle the emergency ambulance call, the Oic of TM/ MRU decided to stay at the scene of traffic accident to assist with police investigation.

Question 3: In this incident, the AAMC did not turnout because of inclement weather. Did the FSD have any guidelines stipulating the circumstances under which AAMCs were not required to turnout?

Reply 3: The Department remarked that according to Ambulance Command Standing Orders, AAMCs could decide not to turnout under certain circumstances, such as when No. 8 or higher typhoon signal was hoisted, when black rainstorm warning was issued by the Hong Kong Observatory, or when the staff concerned thought that he was unable to turnout or proceed to the scene of incident owing to inclement weather or other reasons, e.g. heavy isolated showers.

- 14.2 The Department indicated that a member had raised another question via email: “On 22 June, a woman of about 300 lbs called for an ambulance because of discomfort caused by high blood pressure. Upon arrival of the ambulance at the scene, the three ambulancemen were not strong enough to carry the woman away, so they requested reinforcements from the FSCC. Finally, one more ambulance was dispatched by the FSCC to the scene to provide assistance, i.e. two ambulances were dispatched in this incident. Is it not a waste of resources to despatch two ambulances to handle one ambulance call? In this incident, the Oic of the ambulance could request the FSCC to despatch a fire appliance to provide manpower support, but not another ambulance, so as not to waste ambulance resources and defeat the original purpose of setting up the First Responder service to assist in handling the large number of ambulance calls.” The Department explained to the meeting that the details of the case cited by the member were based on inaccurate coverage in the newspapers. On 22 June, the Department received an ambulance call involving an unconscious patient from Wah King House, Siu Shan Court. An AAMC and an ambulance from Castle Peak Bay Ambulance Depot were dispatched to the scene. When the patient was conveyed to the emergency ward, there were some ambulance crew members who remained stand-by near the hospital and they did help carry the patient. But it was not like what the newspaper reported – that the three ambulancemen were not strong enough and had to call the FSCC for reinforcements. Regarding the ambulance call from King Fu House, Shan King Estate, the patient was of normal body build and there was no such case as the three ambulancemen were not strong enough to carry the patient. The Department continued that if the ambulance personnel needed reinforcements to carry a patient, the FSCC could despatch fire personnel or an ambulance aid motorcycle to provide assistance, with a view to better utilizing resources and delivering the most effective services.
- 14.3 The Department told the meeting that a member had raised the following question via email: “At present, AAMCs provide service only from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. Could the Department extend the daily operating hours of AAMCs to 24 hours?” The Department explained that AAMCs were particularly useful when there was traffic congestion, when the road surface was narrow, or when ambulances could not reach the scene within the response time owing to various reasons. The original operating hours of AAMCs were from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. To cope with service demand, a trial was underway to extend the operating hours of AAMCs from 7:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.
- 14.4 A member suggested that the Department could invite St John’s Ambulance or Auxiliary Medical Service to provide assistance so as to alleviate the current

ambulance manpower shortage. The Department explained that the two organizations mentioned above had resource constraints themselves, so they might not be able to cope with any additional service demand. Moreover, the Ambulancemen's Union also strongly opposed this proposal. To better utilize resources, the Department had set up an Urgent Care Fleet, composing of teams of 2 people, to specifically take up the task of inter-hospital transfer of patients. To meet the growing ambulance service demand, the SAR government pointed out in its recent policy programme that it would explore different long-term proposals to seek for better ways to satisfy public need for emergency ambulance service. A member proposed to increase the number of stand-by Civil Aid Service members at fire stations as the hill fire season had come. The Department replied that the stand-by CAS manpower at fire stations was not arranged by the FSD but determined by CAS.

- 14.5 A member said that he had served in the AMS before and according to his knowledge, AMS had members standing by throughout the day, so the AMS could provide the same kind of assistance offered by the St John's Ambulance to the FSD at turnout attendance. Or, an AMS member could take up the duty of an ambulanceman so as to provide support to the ambulance crew. The Department remarked that the service provided by AMS to the FSD had ceased for years. He continued to explain that as St John's Ambulance and the AMS were not under the jurisdiction of the FSD, there might be difficulties in respect of training and manpower management. In addition, considering the opposition from the Ambulancemen's Union, it was difficult to accept the suggestion.

15. API on Ambulance Service

- 15.1 The Department briefed the meeting that a member had raised the following in her email: "The FSD's current APIs produced by the Information Services Department available for TV broadcast were on fire service and fire prevention only. The FSD should suggest the production of more APIs on ambulance service, e.g. how to call an ambulance, introduction of paramedic ambulance service, etc." Moreover, another member had stated in a fax: "APIs on ambulance service are usually broadcast on TV. In addition to TV broadcast, can the FSD promote the ambulance service by using poster? For example, to enhance public understanding of the ambulance service by posting posters on promotion boards on the street or government notice boards or in hospitals or government out-patient clinics. The Department would start a new round of ambulance service promotion, including APIs on TV and radio, posters, etc., with a view to educating the public to make proper use of emergency ambulance service. The posters were expected to be posted on street promotion boards, government departments, public hospitals/

out-patient clinics. The Department also explained that it was ISD that determined which API was to be broadcast on TV and the decision was based on the influence of the subject matter on people's livelihood.

16. World Trade Organization(WTO) – Hong Kong Ministerial Conference

16.1 The Department informed the meeting that a member had made the following enquiry via e-mail: "Is FSD offering any assistance to the organizing body of the WTO - Ministerial Conference to be held on 13-18 December 2005? If yes, what is the scope of its duties? Moreover, is there any special arrangement on fire and ambulance services during the conference and is there any impact on the daily operation?" The Department replied that during the conference, the FSD would provide firefighting, rescue and emergency ambulance services; arrange fireboats to standby near Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre; formulate emergency service strategy to deal with road congestion caused by demonstrators near the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre; formulate fire safety guidelines for the conference venues and the hotels accommodating the conference members; and maintain close liaison with other emergency forces and related departments. Furthermore, in order to ensure resources would be available for mobilization in some strategic locations, the FSD would make special arrangements on leave and time-off for certain staff. Then, there would be sufficient staff to implement the contingency plans. The FSD would also arrange more reserve appliances to make mobilization more flexible.

17. Arrangements for Vehicles with Passengers when Refuelling

17.1 The Department told members that a member had raised the following question via e-mail: "Is there any law requiring all passengers to get off a vehicle when the vehicle enters an oil station for refuelling? I ask this question because many mini-buses refuel their oil tanks with the passengers on board and it poses a potential risk to the passengers." The Department explained that in accordance with Section 46(1)(j) of the Road Traffic (Public Service Vehicles) Regulations (Cap. 374D), "a passenger or intending passenger on a public bus, public light bus or taxi shall not enter or remain in or on the vehicle when requested not to do so by the driver or an authorized person on the grounds that the petrol or oil tank of the vehicle is to be filled." The enforcement agency of this regulation was the Transport Department.

17.2 A member stated that the use of mobile phones was prohibited inside oil stations and suggested that the FSD should enact regulations requiring all passengers to get off a vehicle when the vehicle needs refuelling. The Department thanked for the

member's concern for fire safety. The FSD had conducted a study with the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department and there was no evidence to support that the use of mobile phones inside oil stations would cause fires. The example quoted by the member was only a rule set by the oil stations and not a requirement imposed by the Government. The Department would refer to the overseas experience on the above issue and study the feasibility of the member's proposal.

18. Design of Fireboats

- 18.1 The Department stated that a member had raised the following issue via e-mail: "No.4 Fireboat will have been in service for 20 years at the end of this year. As its speed is only 11.5 knots, with a view to enhancing the rescue capacity and shortening the time to arrive at the scene of incidents, I suggest that the FSD should upgrade the specifications of the new No.4 Fireboat to those of a medium fireboat, i.e. a fireboat of about 25m to 30m in length and about 28 to 30 knots in speed." The Department said that recommendation had been submitted to the Government to replace the existing No.4 Fireboat stationed in Aberdeen. In the initial proposal, the new fireboat was about 20-metre long, 5-metre wide and with a speed of about 22 sea knots. The final specifications would be decided by the Government New Construction Section of the Marine Department. The member suggested that the new No.4 Fireboat should be deployed to station at outlying islands while the existing No.2 or No.3 Fireboats should station in Aberdeen so as to enhance the efficiency of marine rescue. The Department thanked for the member's opinion and remarked that the Marine & Offshore Islands Division of the FSD would decide the overall arrangement based on departmental resources and operational need.

19. The 13th Fire Services Department Public Liaison Group

- 19.1 The Department said that applications for membership of the 13th Fire Services Department Public Liaison Group would be accepted starting early next year. The Group would compose of serving members and new members. The number of seats reserved for serving members would not exceed 15, i.e. there would be no more than 5 seats for each region. 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 consecutive years. The remaining seats would be filled by new members. If new applications outnumbered the vacant seats, members would be selected by a random draw.

Any Other Business

20. Fire Inspectors

20.1 A member said that he was shocked to note that there were only 12 fire officers responsible for inspecting buildings in the FSD. In that member's opinion, with over 8 million people in Hong Kong, the number of inspectors was really not enough to cope with the building fire safety work. The member hoped the Department could ask the Security Bureau on behalf of the PLG whether they thought enough resources were allocated for such purpose. The Department replied that the 12 Building Services Inspectors in the department were responsible for inspecting fire safety facilities of new buildings only. In fact, there were many more fire personnel who were responsible for inspecting other kinds of buildings. For instance, the Dangerous Goods Division had over 30 fire personnel responsible for building inspection. In response to the member's follow-up question, the Department said that all fire stations had to conduct a site inspection within 24 hours after receiving a fire hazard complaint. According to the law, all fire service installations in old buildings had to be inspected by fire service installation contractors once every year. Subsequent to an inspection, the contractor would list the inspection results on the "Certificate of Fire Service Installation and Equipment", which would be submitted to the Department and issued to the building owners. He also pointed out that currently, the Department had adequate resources to conduct building fire service installations inspection and the number of fires each year was decreasing. The Department had all along been trying to improve the fire safety installations of old buildings. The fire personnel would pay special attention to the fire service installations while inspecting old buildings. If any irregularities were found, they would issue Fire Hazard Abatement Notices to the owners.

20.2 In response to a member's enquiry, the Department said that some citizens chose to report fire hazards to the FSCC because they might not want to disclose their identities or because the management companies of the building did not have the power to enforce the law. The Department would deal with the complaints as soon as possible after receiving them.

21. Personnel of the FSCC

21.1 A member claimed that some expatriates found it difficult to communicate with the FSCC personnel. As a result, the safety of the expatriates and foreign domestic helpers in Hong Kong would be affected. The member wanted to know about the departmental policy on deploying personnel to the FSCC, and also suggested that

staff fluent in English should be deployed to the FSCC for each duty shift. The Department replied that the minimum academic qualifications for FSCC personnel were Form Five standard. Since the department had raised the entry requirements recently, the new recruits had at least a pass in English in the HKCEE. In addition, all the personnel in the FSCC could communicate in English. However, there might be difficulties in communication if callers spoke with heavy accents. Another member said that all the console operators in the FSD could speak fluent English. Some of them even knew several foreign languages. If there were communication problems between individual operators and the callers, such cases would be referred to the supervisors immediately.

22. Knapsack Pump

- 22.1 A member stated that she had written to the Chief Fire Officer(New Territories) on 3rd January 2000 and suggested that the Department should procure knapsack pumps which complied with OSH requirements for hill fire fighting. The knapsack pumps could enhance the efficiency of hill fire fighting and be provided to officers of other departments at the scene when necessary. The member was very delighted that the Department had accepted the member's suggestion and procured the equipment. She therefore encouraged other PLG members to put forward more constructive suggestions to the Department. The Department said that the Department would constantly review the existing stock of equipment and be looking out for any new equipment in the market. The Department would consider introducing any new equipment that could enhance working efficiency or improve occupational safety and health.

23. Attending Calls Involving Patients with Heart Attacks

- 23.1 A member stated that the Department had recently despatched both ambulances and First Responders at the same time to attend calls involving patients with heart attacks. The member thought that this arrangement was a waste of resources and suggested that the Department review the arrangement. The Department replied that there had been a recent study which pointed out that the survival rate of heart attack patients in Hong Kong was relatively low. Therefore, the Department decided to despatch both ambulances and First Responders at the same time to attend calls involving patients with heart attacks in order to increase the survival rate of such patients. The Department stressed that if the ambulance and the First Responder available for despatch were from the same location, then only the ambulance would be despatched to attend the call. The member said that she understood that the FSD had been trying hard to rescue the lives of citizens. However, due to limited resources, she worried that the new measures would result

in more cross-district mobilization. The Department said that the Department had planned to increase the number of fire appliances for First Responders so as to enhance the flexibility in mobilization.

24. Computerized Fire Alarm Transmission System [CFATS]

24.1 In response to a member's enquiry, the Department said that in the past, the Chubb Hong Kong Limited had been the franchised operator of the CFATS. The Department would open the operation of the system to other competitors in the market and the details had yet to be confirmed.

25. Further Studies in Spare Time by the FSD Personnel

25.1 A member showed great appreciation for the FSD personnel as they continued to pursue further studies despite the heavy workload. Some of them even come out among the best in international examinations. This was not only an honour of the FSD, but also reflected the personnel's desire for improvement. The member suggested the Department set up a scholarship for the staff. For example, an educational fund might be set up by using the surplus of the 9th World Firefighters Games. The Department thanked for the member's appreciation and suggestion but remarked that the surplus of the 9th World Firefighters Games had to be used for charity purposes or donated to the FS Welfare Fund.

26. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:00p.m.