

The 13th Fire Services Department Public Liaison Group
Notes of the Third Meeting

The third meeting of the 13th Fire Services Department Public Liaison Group (PLG) was held at the Multi-purpose Hall, G/F, Fire Services Headquarters Building on 9 March 2007 at 6:00 p.m.

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Opening Remarks

The Department welcomed all members to the third meeting of 13th PLG.

2. Confirmation of the Notes of the Last Meeting

- 2.1 The Department told members that in para. 28.1 of the notes of the last meeting, which was about the background of the “Star of Life” logo, the name of the god of medicine in ancient Greek mythology should be “Asclepius”.
- 2.2 The notes of the last meeting were confirmed without other amendments.

Matters Arising from Previous Meeting

3. Activities of the PLG

- 3.1 The Department told members that since the last meeting, the Department had invited members to attend 11 activities.
- 3.2 Regarding the suggestion of a member about the organization of a visit to the West Kowloon Rescue Training Centre for members and observers, the Department said that it would arrange the visit and contact members in due course.

4. Dispatching Ambulance in Order of Priority

- 4.1 One of the PLG members said that the ambulance service and the Medical Priority Dispatch System were of considerable importance to the public and FSD. Therefore, it was suggested that the item be kept on the agenda, so that PLG could keep in view the service and performance of FSD in this area.

4.2 The Department agreed to the member's suggestion. He added that the Steering Committee of the Security Bureau was studying the different proposals on Medical Priority Dispatch System as well as the ambulance resources involved. The Department told members that they would be kept informed of the latest information in the coming meetings.

5. Performance Pledge of Fire Services Department

5.1 A member suggested that the item be kept on the agenda, so that the public could know whether the performance of FSD had met the standards. In response, the Department said that the performance pledge would not be amended within a short period of time, and since it had all along referred to the set target (92.5%) in handling building fire calls and emergency ambulance calls, keeping the item on the agenda was not necessary. The member stated that although the set target would not be amended frequently, the performance of FSD might vary each month. He wanted to know whether the performance of FSD for each month had met the standards, and whether FSD had received sufficient resources from the Government. The Department said that the item would be left to the PLG of the next term to determine.

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

6.1 The Department said that up to then, a total of 16 Fire Safety Ambassador Honorary Presidents' Associations (FSAHPA) had been established. Amongst them, the one in Yuen Long had been established on 6 March, while the one in Tuen Mun would be established on 12 April.

6.2 The Department told members that the review on the "Award Scheme for Fire Safety Ambassadors" had been completed in January this year. The new Merit Point System had also been drawn up. It aimed to encourage fire safety ambassadors to actively participate in different kinds of services with the introduction of the new marking scheme, so that fire safety ambassadors who actively participated in fire safety promotion activities and assisted the Department in disseminating fire safety message to the public could be commended and their contributions recognized.

7. Recruitment Arrangement

7.1 The Department informed the meeting that fire and ambulance personnel of different ranks had been recruited in the past year. 14 Station Officers, 86 Firemen and 48 Ambulancemen recruited would receive training on 26th March this year. There would also be new recruits taking up appointment respectively in June and October.

7.2 The Department said that the Government had relaxed the recruitment policy due to improvement in its financial condition. Departments were allowed to launch open recruitment exercises to fill vacancies without the need of seeking approval from the Chief Secretary for Administration, Financial Secretary and Secretary for the Civil Service. FSD would continue to recruit staff in the coming year to fill vacancies and to provide new services.

8. Arrangements for Rescue Operation

8.1 This item had been fully reported in the last meeting. Members agreed to delete this item from the agenda of next meeting.

9. API on Ambulance Service

9.1 This item had been fully reported in the last meeting. Members agreed to delete this item from the agenda of next meeting.

10. Fire Safety Mobile Publicity Unit

10.1 The Department told the meeting that its Community Relations Section was following up the production of the CDs entitled “What to do in case of fire” and “Fire Prevention At Home”, as well as the Braille booklet on fire prevention publicity with the Hong Kong Society for the Blind.

11. FSD West Kowloon Rescue Training Centre

11.1 The Department said that the FSD West Kowloon Rescue Training Centre had started operation in November 2006. As at February 2007, over 1000 members had received training in the Centre.

12. Disciplinary Action

12.1 This item had been fully reported in the last meeting. Members agreed to delete this item from the agenda of next meeting.

13. Overcrowding of Ambulances at Queen Elizabeth Hospital on 19 June 2006

13.1 One PLG members said that according to the ambit of Section 28 “False Alarms of Fire” of the Fire Services Ordinance (Cap. 95), a domestic violence case in which someone requested the Police to call an ambulance did not constitute an offence of false reporting.

She asked how FSD could prevent the abuse of ambulance service.

- 13.2 In response, the Department said that while the fire and ambulance services were emergency services, what constituted an emergency situation had not been decided. Upon receiving any fire or ambulance calls, the Department would respond without hesitation. If the Police suspected a caller of false reporting and wasting police resources, appropriate action would be taken.
- 13.3 The member continued that since the abuse of ambulance service by the public was quite severe, FSD should seek legal advice to prevent such abuse. The Department responded that it would consider taking various measures to prevent the abuse. Short-term measures included reminding the public through publicity and education. Implementation of Medical Priority Dispatch System would be one of the medium term measures. FSD would define what constituted emergency and non-emergency cases, and then mobilize resources based on such definitions. In the long term, the Government would carefully study suggestions from all parties concerned, including the proposal of providing the service at a charge.

14. The Third Generation Mobilizing System (TGMS)

- 14.1 A member stated that he had learnt that the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) had conducted an investigation on the procurement of the TGMS and a senior fire officer was involved in the case. He asked whether this would affect the procurement procedures of FSD and the operation of the TGMS.
- 14.2 The Department replied that the officer concerned had been under investigation and the ICAC had made a prosecution against him. The case was now pending trial. The case would not affect the operation of the TGMS. As the TGMS was a large-scale and complicated system, it was inevitable to have some technical problems in the initial phase of operation. However, after fine-tuning of the system by the contractor and gradual familiarization of the system by the departmental frontline staff, the TGMS was running very smoothly at present.
- 14.3 Another member enquired if FSD had to pay extra maintenance cost to tackle the problems encountered in the initial phase of operation of the TGMS. The Department replied that the TGMS was running smoothly currently and FSD was not required to pay extra maintenance fee other than that stipulated in the contract.
- 14.4 The member further stated that the telephone lines were always jammed during inclement weather and asked whether it would affect the operation of the TGMS. The Department replied that the above problem was related to the telecommunication network and there

was no direct relation with the operation of the TGMS.

- 14.5 Another PLG member stated that as dispatching arrangements of the TGMS were determined by the distance between the fire appliances / ambulances and the scenes of incidents, he would like to know whether this deployment method would cause some staff members, especially the ambulancemen, being deployed continuously and as a result, they were not able to get enough rest. The Department replied that although the deployment of vehicles by the TGMS was based on distance, FSD had adequate ambulances available for mobilisation currently. Moreover, after the ambulances arrived at the hospital, the ambulancemen would have 15 minutes to hand over the casualties to the medical staff and sterilise the ambulances. Therefore, the chance for an ambulance to be deployed continuously was slim.

15. Mongkok Ambulance Depot

- 15.1 The Department told the meeting that there were still some furnishing works to be finished in the newly commissioned Mongkok Ambulance Depot, therefore the date of its opening ceremony had not been fixed yet. After the date was fixed, PLG members would be invited to attend the opening ceremony.

16. Rescue Operations During Typhoon

- 16.1 This item had been fully reported in the last meeting. Members agreed to delete this item from the agenda of next meeting.

17. Government Telephone Directory

- 17.1 This item had been fully reported in the last meeting. Members agreed to delete this item from the agenda of next meeting.

18. Fire Incident in Pak Tin Estate

- 18.1 The Department stated that the internal investigation on the fire incident in Pak Tin Estate had been completed and the report had been submitted to the Police. The Police would consider if it was necessary to hold a coroner inquest on this incident.

- 18.2 One of the members asked whether the fire personnel would search the scene again after the first search. The Department replied that it had reviewed the relevant operational guidelines after the fire incident in Pak Tin Estate. The officer-in-charge at the scene could arrange another search if he considered it was necessary to do so. The frontline staff had also been reminded to bear in mind the above guidelines.

18.3 Members agreed to delete this item from the agenda of next meeting. The Department would inform members if there was any new development on this matter.

19. Inter-hospital Transfer Services

19.1 The Department told members that the Security Bureau was still studying the suggestion about handing over of some “Priority Two Urgent Calls” to the Auxiliary Medical Service (AMS), and no decision had been made yet.

19.2 One PLG member said that members of the Auxiliary Services were not medical aid professionals. In terms of qualification in providing emergency relief, they could not stand comparison with ambulancemen of FSD. She asked whether FSD would consider seeking assistance from other organizations in sharing part of the non-emergency ambulance work. In response, The Department answered that the “Priority Two Urgent Calls” were mainly cases requiring transfer of patients to another hospital. In these cases, the conditions of patients were relatively stable, so the AMS should be able to provide the service.

20. Engine of an Ambulance on Fire

20.1 This item had been fully reported in the last meeting. Members agreed to delete this item from the agenda of next meeting.

21. “The Exhibition Plan of the Fireboat Alexander Grantham”

21.1 The Department told members that renovation and restoration work were still being undertaken by the LCSD. It was expected that the exhibition would be open to the public in the latter half of the year. Members were reminded to pay attention to the opening date for visit.

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

22. “Life Star” Symbol

22.1 This item had been fully reported in the last meeting. Members agreed to delete this item from the agenda of next meeting.

23. The Arrangement of Turntable Ladder in Fire Stations

23.1 This item had been fully reported in the last meeting. Members agreed to delete this item

from the agenda of next meeting.

24. “Government Transport” Stamps

24.1 This item had been fully reported in the last meeting. Members agreed to delete this item from the agenda of next meeting.

25. The 14th Fire Services Department Public Liaison Group (FSDPLG)

25.1 The Department told members that 63 applications were received for membership of the 14th FSDPLG from 15 January to 14 February 2007. Among the 63 applications received, 15 were from HK Island, and 24 were from Kowloon and the New Territories respectively. According to requirements, the membership of the PLG would compose of serving members and new members. The maximum number of seats reserved for serving members would be 15, i.e. no more than 5 seats for each region. The Department had already consulted members about their wish. As there were no more than five members in each region who wished to serve another term, no drawing was necessary and all of them would be re-appointed. The Department thanked these members for their support. The remaining seats would be filled by new members who would be selected by a random draw after the meeting.

New Business

26. Fire Prevention Measures of Railways

26.1 One member had raised a question by fax about the West Rail fire incident on 14 Feb 2007. The Department briefed members on the fire safety measures of railways in Hong Kong.

26.2 A member asked about what “Cabin Concept” was. The Department replied that it was a concept of fire safety measure required for constructions with special purposes (such as the passenger terminal building of the airport as well as railway stations). Since the accommodation areas of railway stations were huge and their design special, the measures adopted would be different from those for general buildings. As areas with low throughputs (such as the ticketing concourse) had low fire loads, they could be exempted from installation of sprinkler systems. However, as part of the ticketing concourse had been modified for commercial purpose, to tackle the problem of difference in fire loads, the shops inside the railway stations were designed with the cabin concept, by which a specially designed sprinkler system and smoke extraction installation were used to block the spread of smoke and fire and to extract smoke out of the cabin. The member continued to ask whether there were several extraction points but only one single smoke outlet in all the shops. The Department replied that the cabin design was different for

each station, so the designs of the smoke extraction systems would also be different. In addition, since there were limitations on the size of shops and the nature of business, approvals had to be obtained from the committees concerned before operation of businesses.

- 26.3 A member asked whether the mobile firefighting supporting machine (LUF60) was suitable for use in all tunnels. The Department replied that if LUF60 could be moved to the entrance of or any point inside the tunnel, the fire personnel could use it to blow the smoke inside the tunnel to the other end, thus facilitating the work of firefighters in saving lives and extinguishing fire.
- 26.4 Another member said that according to the news report, the West Rail train driver in the incident had taken out a dozen fire extinguishers from the train compartment to fight the fire. He asked why it was not possible to install portable fire extinguishers in designated points of the Tai Lam Tunnel, or to use the fire hydrants inside the tunnel for putting off the fire. In response, the Department said that the train driver did take out fire extinguishers from the train compartment to fight the fire. Actually, fire hydrants were installed on the horizontal passageway inside the tunnel, but such fire hydrants were only designed for use by the fire personnel and not for the general public or train drivers. In addition to the train compartments, the electrical equipment rooms located at the side of the tunnel were also installed with portable fire extinguishers. In general, the fire service installations in Tai Lam Tunnel were sufficient.
- 26.5 A PLG member asked why FSD only provided two LUF60, one in Kowloon and one on Hong Kong Island, but none in the New Territories. The Department replied that as LUF60 was suitable for operation in tunnels, and there were more tunnels in Kowloon and on Hong Kong Island, the two LUF60 were therefore deployed in these two regions. If there were fire accidents in the New Territories requiring the mobilization of LUF60, FSD would make the appropriate deployment.

Adjournment of Meeting

27. The Department told the meeting that due to time limitation, the items submitted earlier by members could not be all discussed and they would be carried forward to the next meeting for discussion.
28. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:30p.m.