

The 18th Fire Services Department Public Liaison Group
Notes of the Third Meeting

The third meeting of the 18th Fire Services Department Public Liaison Group (PLG) was held at the Multi-Purpose Hall, G/F., Fire Services Headquarters Building on 21st March 2012 at 6:30 p.m..

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Opening Remarks

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

2. Confirmation of the Notes of the Last Meeting

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

Matters Arising from Previous Meeting

3. Activities of PLG

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

- 157th Passing-out Parade (23 December 2011)
- Wong Tai Sin Fire Station Open Day cum Fire Safety Carnival (15 January 2012)
- Launching Ceremony of “Elite Brigades” cum Fire and Ambulance Services Promotion Day (18 February 2012)
- Yuen Long Fire Station Open Day (19 February 2012)
- Visit to Airport Fire Station (25 February 2012)
- Yau-Tsim-Mong District Fire Safety Carnival cum Tsim Sha Tsui Fire Station Open Day (26 February 2012)

4. Performance Pledges of FSD

4.1 The Department mentioned that in 2011, FSD responded to an average of 93.42% of fire incidents within the graded response time, while the response time performance of ambulance service was 93.53%. In 2011, a total of 690 114 ambulance calls were received, representing a slight increase of 0.4% when compared with 687 133 calls in 2010. From January to February 2012, a total of 124 175 ambulance calls were received, i.e. 2 070 calls per day on average, which was the same as the figures in the same period of 2011.

5. Publicity Activities of FSD

5.1 The Department told members that the number of visitors to the Fire Safety Education Bus had reached 22 763 as at the end of February and favourable response had been received from the public as reflected by numerous reservation 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 radios, FSD continued to collaborate with Radio 1 of Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) to broadcast a 30-minute radio programme in “Happy Daily” on Fridays from 11:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon. To achieve better promotion effect, the episode broadcast on 2 March was produced in a form of variety programme. A session with audience participation was included to create a cheerful atmosphere, and the duration of the programme was extended to 1.5 hours. The episode included introduction of marine fire-fighting and rescue work of FSD, demonstration by fire investigation dog, question and answer session on fire prevention for audience and live performance by FSD band. The programme was available for replay on RTHK website.

6. Maintenance, Repair and Replacement of Ambulances

6.1 The Department indicated that FSD had already replaced 217 ambulances as scheduled. As at 10 February 2012, a total of 263 new ambulances were put into service, including 217 replacement ambulances and 46 additional ambulances. The additional ambulances would be deployed to deal with the ever-increasing ambulance calls. Besides, FSD would also replace 43 town ambulances, two cross country ambulances and purchase 21 additional town

ambulances by the end of 2012 for providing additional ambulance shifts as well as maintenance and logistic support.

7. Fire Protection and Ambulance Services Promotion

7.1 The Department said that the first four episodes of “Elite Brigades” had been broadcast from 7:35 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. on TVB Jade on 25 February, 3 March, 10 March and 17 March (Saturday) respectively. The drama series had received positive response from audience and had been viewed by about 1.3 million people. It was also ranked the “Most Clicked Programme” on RTHK Website.

7.2 One of the PLG members showed appreciation for superb production of the Fire Services TV drama series and its sequel which truly reflected the work and equipment of fire and ambulance personnel. He asked whether FSD would collaborate with RTHK again in producing drama series. He also requested FSD representatives to give a brief introduction on the “3D Camera” that appeared in “Elite Brigades”. The Department thanked the member for his compliments and said that FSD wished to cooperate with RTHK again in promoting fire and ambulance services via television programme in the future. The Department indicated that FSD currently had only one “3D Camera” for shooting 360-degree panorama pictures at the scene of incident, which could facilitate fire investigation. Upon shooting with the device, the scene could be portrayed and the distance between objects could be calculated with the aid of computer software.

7.3 The Department told members that the Department had arranged for broadcast of the promotional clip “The Proper Ways to Escape a Fire” via various television channels. The clip was also broadcast on trains along MTR East Rail Line, West Rail Line and Ma On Shan Line and had been viewed by over 1.6 million people to date. The Department also broadcast a clip on more than 3 200 buses via the broadcast facility on bus (Roadshow) to educate the public about the proper actions to be taken in a fire for ensuring safety of occupants of or visitors to buildings. The clip had been viewed by about 2 million passengers so far.

7.4 The Department continued that the Department was producing a new series of promotional clip and recording on the “Proper Ways to Escape a Fire”, which would remind the public to take with their keys, mobile phone and towel when escaping a fire. The functions of these items are as follows:

Keys:	If the exit staircase or corridor is filled with dense smoke, people may return to their home with the keys.
Mobile phone:	People may seek help from rescue personnel and tell them the location where they are trapped using their mobile phone.
Towel:	Covering nose and mouth with towel allays airway irritation.

7.5 The Department told members that to allow people of different ethnic groups to receive proper information about fire safety, including what to do in case of fire, the Department produced fire safety brochures in different languages, including Chinese, English, Filipino, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Thai, Indian, Urdu and Nepali. The public and visitors may get a copy of such brochures at fire stations or download it from the website of the Department.

7.6 The Department expressed that the Department was working with the Housing Department in studying the feasibility of disseminating messages on fire prevention and proper use of ambulance service in the form of “running texts” via the Housing Channel.

8. Future Developments of FSD

8.1 The Department told members that FSD would construct a new ambulance depot in Choi Shun Street, Sheung Shui to cope with the demand for ambulance service in the North District in the New Territories. The proposal would be submitted to the Public Works Subcommittee of the Legislative Council. If the proposal was approved, the construction work would be expected to commence in February 2013 and complete in January 2015.

8.2 The Department said that Aberdeen Fire Station, which was currently located in Wong Chuk Hang Road, would be reprovisioned at No. 1 Nam Fung Road. The new fire station would be attached with an ambulance depot to meet public demand for emergency service and further enhance the quality of service in that district. The construction work was expected to complete in mid-2012. The

new premise would be renamed as Aberdeen Fire Station cum Ambulance Depot. Upon commissioning of the new facility, the current Aberdeen Fire Station would be demolished.

8.3 The Department continued that the Department had set up the HazMat Team in March this year to further enhance FSD's capability to handle different types of HazMat incidents. Such incidents included leakage of logistic or industrial chemicals or radioactive substance, as well as nuclear and biochemical incidents. Currently, the four frontline teams were stationed at Sheung Wan Fire Station, Tsim Sha Tsui Fire Station, Sha Tin Fire Station and Lai King Fire Station, respectively. All members of the HazMat Team were required to receive specialised training. In addition to HazMat incidents, they were also responsible for routine fire-fighting and rescue work.

9. Recruitment Matters

9.1 Members agreed to delete this item.

10. Matters concerning Fire Safety Inspections

10.1 Members agreed to delete this item.

11. Medical Priority Dispatch System

11.1 The Department said that FSD provided simple post-dispatch advice to callers since 1 May 2011 for three types of cases, namely bleeding, fracture or dislocation of limbs and burn. As at 29 February 2012, Fire Services Communications Centre (FSCC) operators provided post-dispatch advice for 2 516 cases, including 2 216 cases for bleeding, 217 cases for fracture and dislocation of limbs and 83 cases for burn. The Department conducted a telephone survey of callers who had received post-dispatch advice. Among the 890 respondents, 98.2% were satisfied with the post-dispatch advice they received; 97.4% agreed that the advice was useful in handling the patients; and 98.7% agreed that the Department should continue to provide post-dispatch advice in the future.

11.2 The Department continued that the abovementioned results of survey showed that a majority of people who had received post-dispatch advice were satisfied

with the service and agreed that the advice was helpful to the patients. They also considered that FSD should continue to provide this type of service in the future. Therefore, if resources permitted, the Department would examine the ways to gradually extend and enhance such service.

11.3 One of the PLG members asked about the latest development of the Medical Priority Dispatch System. The Department replied that the Security Bureau was duly considering the opinions of members of the Panel on Security of the Legislative Council, the public and stakeholders.

12. Naming of Ranks

12.1 Members agreed to delete this item.

13. Fire Appliances

13.1 Members agreed to delete this item.

14. High Angle Rescue Team

14.1 Members agreed to delete this item.

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

15.1 Members agreed to delete this item.

16. Equipment in Ambulances

16.1 Members agreed to delete this item.

17. Ambulance Services

17.1 Members agreed to delete this item.

18. Law Enforcement Procedures Adopted by Fire Personnel

18.1 Members agreed to delete this item.

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

19.1 Members agreed to delete this item.

20. Matters Concerning Ambulances

20.1 Members agreed to delete this item.

21. Matters Concerning Driving of Ambulances

21.1 Members agreed to delete this item.

22. FSD Stress Counselling Team

22.1 Members agreed to delete this item.

New Items

23. Equipment of Fire Personnel

23.1 One PLG member asked in writing before the meeting about information on “Rescue Breathing Apparatus” (RBA) and whether the Department would study the ways to reduce loads carried by fire personnel during operation. The Department said that the Department introduced RBA on 17 January 2012. This device was a set of self-contained open-circuit portable air supplying tool with positive pressure. If anyone was trapped in an environment where it was difficult for them to breathe, fire personnel might provide fresh air for them with RBA during rescue operation. It helped them maintain normal respiration and escape the dangerous scene as soon as possible. Another function of this device was to provide air to fire personnel equipped with breathing apparatus. If they were trapped and their cylinder ran low on air, they could quickly obtain extra air using a specially designed high pressure air hose without having to remove any parts of the breathing apparatus or mask they were wearing, so that they could continue with the rescue.

23.2 The Department continued that the Department were very concerned about the load carried by fire personnel during operation and dedicated in finding a way to

reduce such load. Therefore, when designing the RBA configuration, the Department decided to replace the 6.7 litre cylinder with a brand new 4.3 litre fibre cylinder, which was lighter in weight. In addition, the Department was now planning to equip all frontline rescue vehicles, such as hydraulic platforms and pumps with RBA, so that more frontline personnel could use it.

24. Digital Communications System

24.1 One PLG member asked in writing before the meeting whether the new digital communications system helped the Department deploy resources more efficiently. He also mentioned that according to a news report, the new digital communications system might impair the right to know of the media. Therefore, he asked whether the Department would review the current approach of information dissemination. The Department said that the old Analogue Trunked Radio System commenced operation in 1997. The general lifespan of such system was 10 to 15 years. To achieve and maintain efficient radio communication at scenes of incident, the Department commissioned the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department to conduct a consultancy study in 2007 (the tenth year following the commissioning of the system), and decided to replace the old system with the new digital system thereafter. The Department introduced the Digital Trunked Radio System in July last year. Since the new system was still under testing at that time, it was in parallel operation with the existing Analogue Trunked Radio System. The testing completed in January this year with encouraging results. Hence, the Digital Trunked Radio System has fully commissioned since 1 February this year. As the performance of the old system was deteriorating, and some of the parts were no longer produced by the manufacturer, FSD could not maintain the old system effectively. Therefore, the old system was decommissioned in January.

24.2 The Department told members that the Department had adopted a new arrangement for disseminating information about unforeseen incidents since 3 January this year, so as to assist media in reporting breaking news after the implementation of the Digital Trunked Radio System. The new arrangement attached great importance to dissemination of information about incidents that involved public interest. The Department emphasized that when disseminating information, the Department had to meet the requirements under the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance and ensure that all the important principles governing disclosure of third party information under the Code of Access to Information

had been complied with. The information to be disseminated to media by the Department included the date, time, name and number of street at scenes of incident and the category of incident. Besides, to facilitate prompt reporting by media, the Department would upload information about cases involving receipt of multiple calls for service, requests for assistance from FSD, turnout of search and rescue unit, use of hoses/turnout of breathing apparatus team, evacuation, upgrading of fire alarm and multiple casualties to the Government News and Media Information System immediately after deployment of necessary resources.

24.3 The Department said that the Department would disseminate incident information to media via the Government News and Media Information System every half an hour (48 times a day). From 3 January to 9 March, the Department had disseminated information on a total of 13 392 incidents (i.e. about 200 incidents per day on average). FSD also disseminated incident information about emergency ambulance service (including communicable diseases and incidents involving multiple casualties). The Department would continue to maintain communication with media and review the efficiency of the system to optimize the arrangement for information dissemination.

25. Matters concerning Complaints Handling by FSD

25.1 One of the PLG members expressed that he had reported a case involving blocked fire exits in a hotel to FSD when he was attending a banquet there. A member of FSD told him that the guideline for complaints handling by the Department was that a reply would be given to the complainant concerned within 24 hours. He opined that the Department should take immediate action to handle and investigate cases involving potential threats to public safety (e.g. blocked fire exits) to ensure safety of the public. The Department said that upon receipt of report of imminent fire hazard (e.g. blocked fire exits, locked emergency exits etc.) or complaint about dangerous goods (except liquefied petroleum gas (LPG)), FSD would commence investigation within 24 hours. If the complaint was substantiated in the course of investigation by FSD personnel, they would take immediate actions including instituting direct prosecution or issuing Fire Hazard Abatement Notice. Since fire personnel were also responsible for other emergency rescue services, it would be more practical to set the timeframe of investigating these cases as within 24 hours.

Any Other Business

26. Paramedic Equipment Conveyance Vehicle

26.1 One of the PLG members requested information about Paramedic Equipment Conveyance Vehicle. The Department said that the Department expected to introduce a Paramedic Equipment Conveyance Vehicle within this year for delivering a large number of life support equipment to scenes of major incidents to facilitate prompt rescue of the injured by ambulance personnel. The four serving Mobile Casualty Treatment Centres would continue to operate as usual.

27. Reduction in Conditioned Working Hours of Fire Personnel

27.1 One of the PLG members remarked that the “51 Proposal” of the Department suggested reducing the number of fire appliances on standby during night hours. He asked whether this would affect the quality of service. The Department said that the “51 Proposal” met the three pre-requisites proposed by the Standing Committee on Disciplined Services Salaries and Conditions of Service (SCDS), namely being cost neutral, not involving additional manpower and maintaining the same level of service to the public. The Department could reduce the number of fire appliances on standby during night hours not because it considered that the risk of fire incidents was lower at night, but because the traffic condition at night was better than that in the morning. Therefore, the time needed for travelling would be shortened. The Department emphasized that the proposal would not affect the mobilization standards or performance pledges for emergency incidents. In the meantime, the Department was conducting a comprehensive survey on this proposal with FSD members. If they accepted the proposal, the Department would consider putting it on trial. However, if any major problem was identified during the trial or operation efficiency was seriously affected, the Department would not insist to implement the proposal. As such, the public should not be too worried about this.

28. Matters concerning Tunnel Rescue

28.1 One of the PLG members asked how FSD would handle tunnel fire. The Department said that the Department had specific contingency plans in place for tunnel rescue. If the tunnel was filled with dense smoke, FSD personnel would

request the tunnel company to switch on extraction fans to reduce the dense smoke inside the tunnel, with a view to speeding up the rescue operation. If horizontal means of escape were provided in the tunnel, the public could escape the scene via these exits. As the tunnel was relatively long, fire personnel would determine whether they had to equip themselves with twin cylinder breathing apparatus to facilitate prolonged rescue operation as and when necessary. FSD normally conducted a fire drill for each tunnel during off-peak hours once a year.

29. Daya Bay Contingency Plan

29.1 One of the PLG members asked about the details of the Daya Bay Contingency Plan. The Department said that the task force set up by the Security Bureau had completed reviewing the Daya Bay Contingency Plan and expected to conduct a cross-departmental drill in mid-2012. The latest Daya Bay Contingency Plan had been uploaded to the Government website (<http://www.dbcp.gov.hk>) for public viewing. The Department said that the Department had also established the HazMat Team, which was responsible for handling incidents involving hazardous materials, including nuclear and biochemical incidents. Details are set out in paragraph 8.3 above.

30. There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Fire Services Department
June 2012