

The 19th Fire Services Department Public Liaison Group
Notes of the Second Meeting

The second meeting of the 19th Fire Services Department Public Liaison Group (PLG) was held at the Multi-Purpose Hall, G/F., Fire Services Headquarters Building on 28th November at 6:30 p.m..

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Opening Remarks

The Department welcomed all members to the second meeting of the 19th 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:

- *Ambulance Elites' Caring Show* (7 September 2012)
- *Do Not Misuse Ambulance Service Roving Exhibition* (22 September 2012)
- *160th Passing-out Parade* (26 September 2012)
- *Inter-departmental Vegetation Fire-cum-Mountain Rescue Exercise 2012* (12 October 2012)
- *Fire Prevention Campaign 2012* (16 October 2012)

4. Performance Pledges of FSD

4.1 The Department mentioned that from 1 January to 31 October 2012, FSD responded to an average of 93.56% of fire incidents within the graded response

time, while the response time performance of ambulance service was 92.95%. During the said period, a total of 612 745 ambulance calls were received, i.e. 2 015 calls per day on average, representing an increase of 6.5% when compared with the 575 433 calls in the same period of 2011.

5. Publicity Activities of FSD

5.1 The Department told members that as at the end of October, the number of visitors to the Fire Safety Education Bus had reached 32 984 and the Department had received a tremendous amount of booking requests. The Bus would continue to visit schools, housing estates and community halls, etc. in various districts to conduct fire protection publicity and education. Regarding fire prevention publicity on radio, FSD would continue to collaborate with RTHK Radio 1 to produce a 30-minute show in the radio programme *Happy Daily*. The show would be broadcast every Friday from 11:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon. To further promote the aforesaid show, RTHK would organise an outdoor broadcast activity lasting for about one hour in the first quarter of 2013. The Department would invite all PLG members to the activity in due course.

6. Maintenance, Repair and Replacement of Ambulances

6.1 The Department said that during the period from 5 January 2009 to 9 November 2012, a total of 317 new ambulances had been put into service, including 248 replacement ambulances, two cross country ambulances and 67 additional ambulances. These additional ambulances would be deployed to deal with the ever-increasing ambulance calls and provide maintenance and logistic support. Moreover, FSD would also replace 12 town ambulances by the end of 2012.

7. Fire Protection and Ambulance Services Promotion

7.1 The Department said that *Fire Prevention Campaign 2012* was broadcast on TVB Jade and HD Jade on 20 October 2012 from 8:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. The programme attracted about 1.1 million viewers and successfully disseminated fire prevention messages. FSD would also like to thank all PLG members for their participation in the video recording of the kick-off ceremony held on 16 October 2012 (Tuesday). In addition, the Department was producing a new DVD package to promote fire protection, the contents of which included household fire prevention and means of escape for the physically immobile

persons in case of fire. The production works would be completed by December 2012.

7.2 The Department continued to inform the members that the Fire Safety Education in Kindergartens Programme had received very favourable response. The provision of such service was welcomed by kindergartens and so many schools had actively participated in it. 492 kindergartens (32 527 children in total) had taken part in the Programme since its launch in November 2011. From October 2012, it had been extended to all English-medium international schools and ethnic minority kindergartens with a view to fostering the correct fire safety concepts for more children.

7.3 As regards the promotion of the message of “do not misuse ambulance service”, the Department mentioned that the Ambulance Command had organised the following public education activities as at 31 October 2012:

(1) Four “Do Not Misuse Ambulance Service Roving Exhibitions”:

Date	Venue	Co-organiser
12 February	Podium Food Square, Lok Fu Shopping Mall	Wong Tai Sin District Office
19 February	Wong Tai Sin Lung Cheung Mall	
7 April	Mong Kok Macpherson Playground	Hospital Authority, Auxiliary Medical Service and Hong Kong St. John Ambulance
22 September	North District Community Centre and Town Hall	

(Note: The next exhibition would be held tentatively on 8 December 2012 at Sha Tsui Road Playground, Tsuen Wan.)

(2) Organising education talks on ambulance services, ambulance aid knowledge and proper use of ambulance resources in 46 primary and secondary schools.

7.4 The Department added that the special programme *Ambulance Elites’ Caring Show* for the Ambulance Service Campaign 2012 was produced by the television station again. It was broadcast on TVB Jade on 23 September to promote the message of “do not misuse ambulance service” to the public. The highest and

average rating point of the programme was 14.7 and 14 respectively, representing a viewership of more than 0.95 million.

8. Future Developments of FSD

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

- 8.1 The Department told the members that the proposal concerned was submitted to the Public Works Subcommittee of the Legislative Council (LegCo) for deliberation and was endorsed on 28 November 2012. Besides, the Department would seek funding from the LegCo Finance Committee in January 2013 for the construction of the ambulance depot.

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

- 8.2 The Department told members that the construction of fire station cum ambulance facility at Cheung Yip Street, Kowloon Bay was scheduled for completion in mid-2013.

Construction of New Aberdeen Fire Station cum Ambulance Depot

- 8.3 The Department said that the new Aberdeen Fire Station cum Ambulance Depot at 1 Nam Fung Road had been put into service on 28 September 2012. Members agreed to delete this item from next meeting's agenda.

Redevelopment of Fire Services Training School

- 8.4 The Department continued to said that the new Fire Services Training School at Pak Shing Kok, Tseung Kwan O would cover an area of 158 000 m² (including a slope of about 53 000 m² in area) and would be equipped with a number of advanced simulation training facilities, allowing trainees to learn various fire-fighting strategies and techniques for different types of fire in a controlled and safe environment. The new training school would also be provisioned with ambulance training facilities to meet the training needs of ambulance services. Besides, the school would provide driving training facilities for trainees to undergo fire appliances and ambulances driving training. The construction works of the training school had commenced in August 2012 and was scheduled

for completion in late 2015. The Department added that FSD had already issued letters to invite PLG members to the Ground-breaking Ceremony of the new Fire Services Training School to be held on 5 December 2012. All members were cordially welcome to the event.

8.5 The Department told the members that the new Fire Services Training School would provide simulators mainly covering seven types of possible emergency situations which were relatively complex and large scale, including incidents related to buildings, transportation, marine and water, gas, aircraft, hazardous material and structural collapse. In addition, the new school would include a fire services education centre, providing interactive and multimedia information facilities and different experiential areas. A display area would also be set up in the centre to introduce the history and development of FSD.

9. Post-dispatch Advice (Known as Medical Priority Dispatch System previously)

9.1 The Department said that as at 31 October 2012, Fire Services Communications Centre (FSCC) operators had provided post-dispatch advice for 5 470 cases, including 4 444 bleeding cases, 470 fracture and dislocation of limbs cases, 175 burn cases, 326 convulsion cases and 55 heat stroke cases. As at the end of October 2012, of the 2 497 respondents to the telephone survey, 98.7% were satisfied with the post-dispatch advice they received; 98.8% agreed that the advice was useful in handling the patients; and 99.5% agreed that the Department should continue to provide post-dispatch advice in the future.

9.2 A PLG member expressed that FSD should also consider whether the callers had followed the advice accordingly. Hence, he suggested that apart from the above survey, the Department should also interview the ambulance personnel deployed to the scene. The Department said that the Ambulance Command was carefully considering his suggestion.

10. Reduction in Conditioned Working Hours of Fire Personnel

10.1 The Department mentioned that FSD had conducted a questionnaire survey in August 2012 to collect views of relevant members on the “New 51 Proposal”. The survey results showed that more than half of the Fire Stream personnel supported the said proposal. Therefore, the Department expected to submit a detailed proposal to the Administration and discuss the implementation details of

the pilot scheme as early as practicable, so that such proposal could be launched on a trial and phased basis the soonest possible.

11. New Reflective Vest

11.1 The Department said that to enhance the occupational safety of frontline personnel who discharged duties on highway, the Department produced new reflective vests with reflective and fluorescent materials in accordance with the requirements of international standard BS EN 471 “high visibility warning clothing for professional purposes”. These vests would be worn by fire/ambulance personnel when discharging duties on highway.

11.2 A PLG member mentioned that the new reflective vests would become too wide and too long if the ambulance personnel worn them without putting on the orange jackets. The Department said that as international standard BS EN 471 provided for the area of fluorescent and reflective materials, it was necessary for the area of these materials on the new reflective vests to conform to the aforesaid standard, such that the design of these vests could meet the international safety requirements. The basic requirements of international standard BS EN 471 were that the total area of the fluorescent and reflective materials should not be less than 0.5 m² and 0.13 m² respectively. Besides, the Department had already adopted corresponding measures and developed wearing guidelines. When fire/ambulance personnel discharged duties on road, they would decide whether to wear the vests in the light of the risk assessment made on the actual environment and the nature of duties to be carried out. In addition, the fire-fighting protective suits used by frontline fire personnel who carried out fire-fighting and rescue operations on road had already been equipped with basic reflective materials, so they would be allowed not to wear the new reflective vests or not.

12. Fire Safety Ambassador and Estate Fire Safety Ambassador

12.1 Members agreed to delete this item.

13. Mementos of PLG (Known as Commemorative T-shirts for PLG Members previously)

13.1 In the last meeting, a PLG member suggested designing lapel pins or badge

holders with neck lanyards. The Secretary showed the samples in the meeting for members' reference. After discussion and voting, members agreed to produce lapel pins as PLG memento. The Secretary would follow up the issue.

New Items

14. Fire Services Museum

14.1 A PLG member enquired in writing before the meeting about the views and stance of the Department on the setting up of Fire Services Museum. He also asked whether the "Fireboat Alexander Grantham Exhibition Gallery" managed by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) should be considered as Fire Services Museum. The Department said that FSD had been striving to set up a Fire Services Museum and tried to add the element of museum to major private property development projects, but the proposal had yet to be materialised. Nevertheless, a display area would be set up in the fire services education centre of the new Fire Services Training School to introduce the history and development of FSD. The Department mentioned that the "Fireboat Alexander Grantham Exhibition Gallery" was one of the branch museums of the Hong Kong Museum of History managed by LCSD and not under the purview of FSD.

14.2 A PLG member asked whether the Department would consider choosing an old fire station as the site of the Fire Services Museum. The Department said that given the scarcity of land resources in Hong Kong nowadays, the Government would be very prudent in granting each piece of land, and thus the above suggestion was infeasible.

14.3 A PLG member enquired how FSD would dispose of old fire appliances and equipment. Another PLG member suggested that the Department should start keeping fire appliances which were expected to retire for future placing in the Fire Services Museum. The Department mentioned that at present specific types of appliances would be retained by FSD. Other fire appliances and equipment would also be retained depending on their historical value. If resources and space permitted, the Department would keep appliances and equipment which were of historical value as many as possible.

15. Matters Concerning the Management of Old Uniforms and Appliances

15.1 A PLG member asked in writing before the meeting how the Department would dispose of outdated uniforms and retired fire appliances and ambulances. Besides, he enquired why uniforms which were used before reunification (i.e. the former colony) were still managed by FSD. He also asked how individuals or organisations could borrow uniforms which were used before reunification. Furthermore, he wanted to know about the ratio of applications approved by the Department and the justifications. The Department said that FSD would need to seek approval from the authorities (such as the Security Bureau and Government Logistics Department) before replacing different kinds of old uniforms. Under normal circumstances, FSD had to ensure that the current stock of the required uniforms was used up before making arrangement for the procurement of the new ones. If the uniforms returned by different units were already outdated, they would be destroyed according to the Stores and Procurement Regulations.

15.2 The Department continued to mention that according to Section 27(3) of the Fire Services Ordinance (Cap. 95), “any person who, not being a member, wears, without permission of the Director, the uniform of the Fire Services Department, or any dress having the appearance or bearing any of the distinctive marks of that uniform, shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable to a fine at level 4 and to imprisonment for 6 months.” Any organisation which was interested in borrowing FSD’s uniforms should submit a written application, detailing its information as well as the purpose, nature and arrangements of the proposed activity, to the Management Group of the Fire Services Headquarters.

16. Construction of Additional Fire Stations/Ambulance Depots

16.1 A PLG member expressed in writing before the meeting that the scale of Ma Tau Chung Fire Station was too small, so it should be re-provisioned in Kowloon City or To Kwa Wan. Besides, he stated that given the large area of Sai Kung one fire station was inadequate to meet the needs of that district and suggested constructing an additional fire station and ambulance depot at Clearwater Bay Road. The Department expressed that under the current arrangements, FSD would consider factors such as fire risk and transport network, etc. in each district when determining the number of fire appliances and type of equipment to

be deployed to each fire station. Meanwhile, FSD would review its fire and ambulance services from time to time. During the review, apart from the overall service quality, actual demand for fire stations and ambulance depots in various districts would also be evaluated with regard to the future development projects proposed by the Government. Where upgrading or adjusting the existing facilities and manpower arrangement were necessary, FSD would look into the issue and take follow-up action.

16.2 The Department indicated that to cope with the long-term development in the vicinity of Ma Tau Chung, Kowloon City and To Kwa Wan, etc. and to relieve the overcrowding situation at Ma Tau Chung Fire Station, the Department had already earmarked a site in the former Kai Tak Airport for the reconstruction of a fire station and ambulance depot in the future. In addition, the construction works of the fire station with ambulance facilities at Cheung Yip Street, Kowloon Bay were scheduled for completion in June 2013 in order to provide adequate emergency service coverage for the commercial and residential projects in the Kai Tak Development Area and its vicinity. FSD had also earmarked a site at Clearwater Bay Road for the construction of a fire station and ambulance depot in the future.

17. Matters Concerning Serviceable Period of Newly Procured Appliances

17.1 A PLG member asked in writing before the meeting why the newly procured light rescue units were not available to frontline personnel even they had been delivered to the Workshop in August last year. He pointed out that newly procured appliances could generally enjoy free maintenance services for 12 to 24 months and the said services would not be wasted if these appliances could be deployed and put into service as early as possible. The Department said that after 12 light rescue units had been delivered to the Workshop in August 2012, the contractor needed to adjust some of the settings and install a radio system on the appliances before the Workshop could carry out the acceptance test. Ten of the light rescue units were already available to frontline personnel in early November 2012. The supplier also agreed to extend the maintenance period of the appliances upon request.

18. Workshop Personnel

18.1 A PLG member asked in writing before the meeting about the number of the

existing Workshop personnel. Besides, he enquired whether there was sufficient manpower in the workshops and whether FSD would consider recruiting additional uniformed members to replace the outsourced staff. The Department indicated that open recruitment exercise for Fireman (Workshop) had begun to fill the vacancies. FSD would review its manpower and duty arrangements of different ranks from time to time. As at the end of October 2012, there were 149 Workshop personnel in total, including 88 uniformed members and 61 civilian staff.

19. Rescue Vessels

19.1 A PLG member said that in light of the recent vessel incident, he suggested that the Department procure an additional rescue support vessel in respect of which its specification should be similar to that of new Fireboat 7, with a capacity of 300 persons or above and a maximum speed of 35 knots, in order to arrive at the scene of incident and convey casualties as quickly as possible.

19.2 The Department said that currently there were 21 vessels in total in the Department's fireboat fleet. They included fireboat, rescue launch, support vessel, command boat and speedboat. The Department would duly deploy the vessels to carry out marine fire-fighting and rescue operations according to the risk and danger of different waters. Besides, as the existing Fireboat 7 had been put into service for more than 20 years, FSD had obtained endorsement from the Finance Committee for the replacement of the Fireboat in 2012. The new Fireboat 7 was expected to be put into service at the end of 2014 and would be equipped with more advanced fire-fighting and rescue features and installations to meet the rescue needs nowadays. As regards the performance and installation of the new fireboat, it would have a maximum speed of 35 knots. The vessel would also be equipped with lift rafts with greater capacity (increased from 320 persons at present to 420 persons) for mass rescue and more comprehensive decontamination facilities to enhance the Department's capability to handle sea incidents. Apart from the replacement programme of Fireboat 7, FSD would also duly review and deploy resources in the light of social development and marine risk to meet the needs for fire-fighting and rescue operations on sea.

19.3 A PLG member enquired whether FSD could reduce the weight of fireboat, such as by cutting down the capacity of the foam tank, to increase its speed. Besides,

he considered that rescue efficiency would be affected if the fireboat could only set off until all the personnel concerned arrived. The Department mentioned that each fireboat had its own characteristic. The Department also briefed on the information about the design and safety construction of the fireboat. The main function of the vessel was to carry out fire-fighting and rescue operations, and thus its fire-fighting power would decrease if the foam tank capacity had reduced. Besides, according to the relevant theories of mechanics and hydraulics, when the monitor on the top of the fireboat was in operation, the chance of the vessel overturning would increase if the bottom of the vessel was too light. In addition, the stability of fireboat when in motion should also be considered. Regarding the picking up arrangement of rescue personnel of fireboat, appropriate deployment would be made in light of the prevailing condition of the available operational resources. Though there was no performance pledge on the response time of fireboat, FSD would still deploy the vessel to the scene of incident as soon as practicable.

20. Term of Office of PLG Members

20.1 A PLG member suggested in writing before the meeting that the term of office of PLG members should be increased from one year to two years. The Department stated that PLG members' term was one year as early as its establishment. The purpose of re-electing members every year was to allow more members of the public to express their opinions on fire-fighting and ambulance services. To ensure the continuity of the group, not more than 15 members of the current term (i.e. five from Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and the New Territories respectively) were allowed to remain in the Group from the 5th term. The above arrangement would not only maintain the continuity of the Group, but also absorb new members and so voices from different sectors of the community could be listened. In this connection, FSD opined that the current practice could be maintained. However, if PLG members thought it necessary to change the period of office, FSD held an open mind towards such proposal. After discussion, the Department asked the Secretary to conduct a questionnaire survey after the meeting to collect members' views. If the survey results showed that further follow-up action on the issue was needed, he would suggest convening a special meeting for detailed discussion.

[Post-meeting Note: The Secretary had already issued letters to PLG members on 18 December 2012, requesting them to fill in questionnaires regarding the term

of office of PLG members. The questionnaire survey was completed on 28 December 2012. As the survey results showed that more than half of PLG members agreed on the existing arrangement on the term of office (i.e. a term of office of one year), such arrangement would remain unchanged.]

21. There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Fire Services Department
February 2013