

**The 19<sup>th</sup> Fire Services Department Public Liaison Group**  
**Notes of the Third Meeting**

The third meeting of the 19<sup>th</sup> Fire Services Department Public Liaison Group (PLG) was held at the Multi-Purpose Hall, G/F., Fire Services Headquarters Building on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2013 at 6:30 p.m..

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**Opening Remarks**

The Department welcomed all members to the third meeting of the 19<sup>th</sup> 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:

- Ground Breaking Ceremony of the New Fire Services Training School (5 December 2012)
- FSD Christmas Reception (19 December 2012)
- 161<sup>st</sup> Passing-out Parade (21 December 2012)
- Tsim Sha Tsui Fire Station Open Day cum Fire Safety Carnival (27 January 2013)
- 162<sup>nd</sup> Passing-out Parade (26 March 2013)

**4. Performance Pledges of FSD**

4.1 The Department mentioned that during the period from 1 January to 31 December 2012, FSD responded to a total of 37 638 fire incidents and 30 191

cases of special service. On average, 93.59% of the fire incidents were responded to within the graded response time, while the response time performance of ambulance service was 93.16%. During the said period, a total of 727 300 ambulance calls were received, i.e. 1 993 calls per day on average, representing an increase of 5.39% when compared with the 690 114 calls in the same period of 2011. From January to February 2013, FSD responded to an average of 94.45% of the fire incidents within the graded response time, while the response time performance of ambulance service was 94.11%. During the said period, a total of 117 909 ambulances calls were received, i.e. 1 998 calls per day on average.

- 4.2 A PLG member asked whether the Department had examined the cases where its performance pledge could not be met (92.5%). The Department said that the Department had failed to fulfil its performance pledge mostly because of conditions out of its control, such as a sudden increase in the number of calls during a particular period of time, longer distance between fire stations and scenes of incidents, or traffic congestion, etc.
- 4.3 A PLG member pointed out that some road users lacked knowledge about giving way to emergency vehicles, which hampered rescue work of emergency services. He suggested that the Government should step up its efforts in educating the public on giving way to emergency vehicles, and FSD should also carry out joint enforcement operations with the Hong Kong Police Force and issue tickets to road users who do not give way to emergency vehicles so as to serve a deterrent to other road users. In addition, he suggested that instead of red beacons, yellow beacons should be used on visual alarm devices on large fire appliances under non-emergency circumstances to avoid confusion. The Department said that the Department had efficiently used its resources to produce a promotional clip to educate the public on giving way to ambulances. PLG members' suggestions would be taken into consideration if resources permitted. The Department also noted the suggestions about joint enforcement operations with the Police Force and visual alarm devices.
- 4.4 A PLG member said that volume of sirens of fire appliances and ambulances was too low that it would be difficult for road users to take note of the passage of emergency vehicles. He suggested that the Department should increase the volume of the audio alarm devices to the level of volume of police car sirens, and should make reference to the driving practice adopted by St. John Ambulance.

He also suggested that the Department should record videos of real cases showing road users who do not give way to emergency vehicles as negative examples. The Department said that the volume level of the audio alarm devices adopted by the Department has made reference to the requirement of other audio alarm devices. When there were patients on board, ambulance personnel had to be considerate to them and could not turn the volume too high. Therefore, the Department had to strike a balance between various factors. Besides, the Department could not easily implement the suggestion of filming road users as it would involve the privacy of road users.

## **5. Publicity Activities of FSD**

5.1 The Department told members that as at the end of February 2013, the number of visitors to the Fire Safety Education Bus had reached 42 520 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 organised an outdoor broadcast activity lasting for about one hour on 23 February 2013 at Tsing Yi Promenade. The event was edited into a 30-minute radio programme and broadcast in *Happy Daily* from 11:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon on 8 March 2013. Photos of the event were also uploaded to FSD website for viewing.

## **6. Maintenance, Repair and Replacement of Ambulances**

6.1 The Department said that during the period from 5 January 2009 to 8 March 2013, a total of 329 new ambulances had been put into service, including 260 replacement ambulances, two Ambulance Land Rovers 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 procure 24 town ambulances and replace 30 town ambulances by the end of 2013.

## **7. Fire Protection and Ambulance Services Promotion**

7.1 The Department said that 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 work was still in progress. In addition, the Department's Fire Safety Education in Kindergartens Programme had received very favourable response. Since its launch in November 2012, 709 kindergartens (43 168 children in total) had taken part in the Programme by the end of February 2013.

7.2 As regards the promotion of the message of "do not misuse ambulance service", the Department mentioned that after the previous meeting, the Ambulance Command worked with the Hospital Authority, Auxiliary Medical Service and Hong Kong St. John Ambulance in organising a "Do Not Misuse Ambulance Service Roving Exhibition" on 8 December 2012 at Sha Tsui Road Playground, Tsuen Wan. The next exhibition would be held tentatively on 6 April 2013 at Siu Sai Wan Promenade.

7.3 The Department continued that the Ambulance Command had held education talks on ambulance services, ambulance aid knowledge and proper use of ambulance resources in 49 primary and secondary schools in 2012. During the period from January to February 2013, such talks had been held in 9 primary and secondary schools. The Department also organised a short film competition and 4-panel comic competition to promote the proper use of ambulance resources for primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong in November 2012. The award presentation ceremony was held on 15 March 2013 at the lecture theatre of Kowloon Tong Fire Station.

## **8. Future Developments of FSD**

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

8.1 The Department told members that the funding proposal for the project had been submitted to and endorsed by the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council on 11 January 2013. The construction work commenced in late January 2013 and was scheduled for completion in January 2015.

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

- 8.2 The Department told members that the construction work of the project concerned was scheduled for completion in June 2013. The fire station had been officially named as Kai Tak Fire Station. The Department said that there would be stores for ambulance equipment and urban search and rescue equipment in the new fire station for handling fire and ambulance calls in that district.
- 8.3 A PLG member asked whether there would be any special features for fire service installations of the new cruise terminal. The Department said that on top of basic fire service installations, radio repeaters would also be installed at the cruise terminal building to facilitate operation of the new generation radio communication system, thereby enhancing radio communication efficiency.

Redevelopment of Fire Services Training School

- 8.4 The Department said that the Ground Breaking Ceremony of the new Fire Services Training School had been successfully held on 5 December 2012 at the construction site in Pak Shing Kok. Hoardings were erected around the site and foundation works had started. FSD was currently liaising with the Architectural Services Department, Electrical and Mechanical Services Department and building work contractors to fine-tune the relevant design. Since there was no further progress for this project for the time being, members agreed to delete this item from next meeting's agenda.

**9. Post-dispatch Advice**

- 9.1 The Department said that the Department had started to provide post-dispatch advice for emergency calls involving hypothermia since 1 January 2013. As at the end of February 2013, Fire Services Communications Centre (FSCC) operators had provided post-dispatch advice for 7 591 cases, including 5 922 bleeding cases, 711 fracture and dislocation of limbs cases, 220 burn cases, 665 convulsion cases, 57 heat stroke cases and 16 hypothermia cases. As at the end of February 2013, of the 3 794 respondents to the telephone survey, 99% were satisfied with the post-dispatch advice they received; 98.9% agreed that the advice was useful in handling the patients; and 99.6% agreed that the Department should continue to provide post-dispatch advice in the future. To

have a more thorough understanding about the effectiveness of the aforesaid service, the Department was considering extending the scope of target respondents to other stakeholders, such as FSCC operators, frontline ambulance personnel and medical staff of accident and emergency departments. The Department said that the Department was developing a computer system for providing more comprehensive and appropriate post-dispatch advice to callers of emergency ambulance services.

#### **10. Reduction in Conditioned Working Hours of Fire Personnel**

10.1 The Department mentioned that the first phase of the trial scheme under the “New 51 Proposal” had started since 15 March 2013, and had been running smoothly since then. To maintain the quality of its service provided during the trial period, the Department would take appropriate measures to reinforce manpower required at scenes of incidents. For instance, in the event that FSCC received two or more calls regarding the same fire incident, or major fire service installations in affected buildings were reported to be faulty, FSD would immediately deploy an additional major pump to the scene as reinforcement. The Department would also establish a coordination group in each operational command to enable exchange of experience about the trial among unit representatives.

#### **11. New Reflective Vest**

11.1 Members agreed to delete this item from next meeting’s agenda.

#### **12. Mementos of PLG**

12.1 The Department said that in the last meeting, PLG members decided to have lapel pins as the mementos of PLG. The Secretary was liaising with manufacturers on procurement matters. During the meeting, the Secretary briefed on the design of the mementos, and it was unanimously accepted by all members.

#### **13. Fire Services Museum**

13.1 Members agreed to delete this item from next meeting’s agenda.

**14. Matters Concerning the Management of Old Uniforms and Appliances**

14.1 Members agreed to delete this item from next meeting's agenda.

**15. Construction of Additional Fire Stations/Ambulance Depots**

15.1 Members agreed to delete this item from next meeting's agenda.

**16. Matters Concerning Serviceable Period of Newly Procured Appliances**

16.1 The Department said that 10 of the 12 new light rescue units mentioned in the last meeting had been available to frontline personnel since early November. The remaining two light rescue units had been made available to them since late November and early December 2012. As for another batch of 10 light rescue units, which were delivered to FSD in December 2012, the contractor was tuning up certain assembly works of the vehicles and installing radio devices on them. As at 12 March 2013, the Department had distributed seven new light rescue units for use by frontline personnel. The supplier agreed to extend the maintenance period of these vehicles accordingly.

16.2 As regards the deployment of new fire appliances, the Department told members that the Department would decide the matter based on geographic locations, demand for services and numbers of existing vehicles of fire stations. In general, if a fire station received more operational calls or was located on a hill, its vehicles would be susceptible to wear due to frequent runs to and fro the hilly roads during operations. The Department tended to deploy newer vehicles to such fire stations.

**17. Workshop Personnel**

17.1 Members agreed to delete this item from next meeting's agenda.

**18. Rescue Vessels**

18.1 Members agreed to delete this item from next meeting's agenda.

## **19. Term of Office of PLG Members**

19.1 The Department said that the Secretary had sent 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 to maintain the existing arrangement on the term of office (i.e. a term of office of one year), such arrangement would remain unchanged. Members agreed to delete this item from next meeting's agenda.

## **New Items**

### **20. Inquest into the Fa Yuen Street Fire**

20.1 A PLG member expressed in writing before the meeting that press reports had stated that the Department had deployed Compartment Fire Specialists to the scene of Fa Yuen Street fire to take part in the rescue operation, but it had taken them one hour to arrive at the scene. The PLG member enquired about duties of the Compartment Fire Specialists and the reason why it had taken them one hour to reach the scene. The Department said that the Compartment Fire Specialists comprised instructors of the Compartment Fire Behaviour Training Unit from the Fire Services Training School at Pat Heung, who were not regular frontline fire-fighting and rescue personnel. On top of the provision of routine training, they might also be deployed to handle building fires of No. 3 or above alarms, and be responsible for fire-fighting strategy review and study. They also had to provide technical support for officers-in-charge of incidents and carry out fire ground investigation according to the circumstances of the scenes. Whenever there was a pressing need, the Compartment Fire Specialists would be sent to the scene to fight fires. When the Compartment Fire Specialists were required to handle a fire, FSCC would notify the head of the Specialists, who would then report for duty to the office-in-charge at the scene of the incident. FSCC would also notify the Fire Services Training School at Pat Heung and arrange for a designated vehicle to carry necessary equipment and/or convey the Compartment Fire Specialists to the fire station nearest to the fire ground, which would serve as a place of assembly.

20.2 The Department told members that on the day when the Fa Yuen Street fire had broken out, 22 fire appliances and about 100 firefighters had arrived at the scene



within the first half hour to carry out fire-fighting and rescue operation, which had met the standard attendance for the relevant alarm fire. Throughout the whole operation, FSD had mobilized over 300 firefighters and ambulance officers, 50 fire appliances of various types, 23 ambulances and one Mobile Casualty Treatment Centre to take part in various rescue operations. Members of the Department rescued 16 residents from several flats in the building at 192-194 Fa Yuen Street and took care of nine other residents on the roof of the building. Meanwhile, FSD members also carried out fire-fighting and rescue work in buildings other than the one located at 192-194 Fa Yuen Street, and rescued a total of 41 people. At the peak of the rescue operation, the Department deployed a total of 25 search and rescue teams for search and rescue operations in different buildings.

20.3 The Department said that FSD had introduced a new search and rescue strategy few years ago. The strategy comprised two key tasks and three search and rescue phases. One of the two key tasks was ventilating the top of staircase/exit to roof and carrying out a swift rescue at staircases and corridors of two uppermost floors of the affected building; another task that had to be performed simultaneously was sending search and rescue teams to flats of people who sought assistance for search and rescue. In the second phase, search and rescue operations would be carried out at the staircases on the five floors immediately above the “fire floors” (i.e. the floor on which the fire broke out and the floor immediately above it) and common corridors. In the final stage, another search and rescue operation would be carried out on the remaining floors and the roof.

## **Any Other Business**

### **21. Impact of the Civil Service Retirement Wave**

21.1 A PLG member asked whether the civil service retirement wave would affect FSD. The Department said that issues pertaining to the retirement wave involved the whole Civil Service. The retirement wave of disciplined services started earlier than that of other grades due to the earlier retirement age of members of disciplined services. In view of this, the Government had approved the resumption of recruitment exercises of disciplined services years ago to maintain sufficient manpower for future provision of services. As for FSD, the Department would deal with the civil service retirement wave through

reorganising workflows, redeploying manpower, adopting different technologies and implementing administrative measures. The manpower condition of FSD was satisfactory.

**22. There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.**

Fire Services Department

May 2013