

The 9th Fire Services Department Public Liaison Group
Notes of the First Meeting

The first meeting of the 9th Public Liaison Group was held at the multi-purpose hall on G/F, Fire Services Headquarters Building at 7:45 p.m. on 22 April 2002.

2. Terms of Reference of the Fire Services Department Public Liaison Group

Members were briefed about their terms of reference, which included :-

- (a) to exchange views on the fire and emergency ambulance services provided by the Fire Services Department;
- (b) to monitor whether the Fire Services Department has achieved the targets set for fire and emergency ambulance services; and
- (c) to give suggestions and opinions on how to improve the service quality.

The Public Liaison Group would not discuss any matter involving policies.

3. Meeting Arrangements for the Public Liaison Group

The group would hold three meetings each year. Before each meeting, the Secretary would write to each member to notify them of the date of the meeting. If members wished to discuss any matter in the meeting, they could use one of the following methods to send the proposed agenda item or discussion paper to the Secretary of the Public Liaison Group:-

- (a) by mail to 8/F., Fire Services Headquarters Building, No. 1, Hong Chong Road, Tsim Sha Tsui East, Kowloon
- (b) by fax to 2367 0973
- (c) by e-mail to the e-mail address: hkfsdenq@hkfsd.gov.hk.

4. Activities of the Public Liaison Group

- 4.1 In order to give members a better understanding of the work of the Fire Services Department, the Department would invite members to attend passing-out parades, open days of fire stations, new fire station/ambulance depot opening ceremonies, fire safety campaign activities, etc. The

Department welcomed members to attend the passing-out parade of ambulance personnel at Fire Services Training School on 26 April 2002. Transportation would be provided for those members who attended the parade. They would be conveyed from the Fire Services Headquarters Building to the Fire Services Training School, and vice versa after the parade ended.

- 4.2 Besides holding meetings with members, the Department had also arranged various kinds of activities for them, e.g. viewing the shooting of the TV series 'Burning Flames II' at Television Broadcasts Limited, visit to the Airport Fire Station, and making special arrangements for members to attend the Fire Safety Ambassador Trainer courses.
- 4.3 In response to members' suggestion of arranging visits to the Workshop and the Driving Training School, the Department replied that the Workshop and the Driving Training School were places for repairing fire appliances and training fire personnel to drive rescue vehicles, and they might not be suitable for members to visit. However, a final decision would be made on the issue according to the views of the whole liaison group. If only a few members were interested, the Department would consider arranging for individual members to visit the Workshop or the Driving Training School.

Confirmation of the Notes of the Last Meeting

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

Matters Arising from the Notes of the Last Meeting

6. Performance Pledge

The pamphlets of the Fire Services Department 2002 Performance Pledge were under production. The pamphlets would be sent to members for perusal once they were available.

7. Fire Safety Ambassadors

- 7.1 As at 31 March 2002, the number of Fire Safety Ambassadors (FSA) had exceeded 24 321.
- 7.2 In response to a member's enquiries, the Department stated that the main targets of the FSA Scheme were employees of companies and organizations, as well as members of mutual aid committee of public housing estates. The Department hoped that the public's fire safety

awareness could be raised through the scheme. Individuals could obtain application forms from and return the completed forms to fire stations, and the fire stations would then arrange training courses according to the applicants' choices.

7.3 Regarding the suggestion that FSA training courses should include some hill fire fighting skills, the Department stated that fighting hill fire was a very dangerous task, and since the objective of FSA Scheme was only to disseminate fire (including hill fire) prevention messages amongst people in different social strata, the Department would not request the public to help firemen fight hill fire.

7.4 A member asked how a FSA Trainer could organize FSA training courses for the residents in his/her neighbourhood. The Department replied that the Community Relations Division could provide support to the FSA Trainers, including preparation of course materials, printing of FSA membership cards and certificates, etc.

8. Establishment of Special Rescue Squads

8.1 The main purpose of establishing special rescue squads was to cope with major incidents such as landslips, building collapse, etc. The Department had established special duty squads in 12 divisions in the territory, and the squads had formally become operational in April 2002.

8.2 Besides upgrading the equipment of the rescue personnel, the Department also provided special training for the special rescue squads. Up to now, 296 fire service members had completed a special training course which lasted for 25 working days. To facilitate the manpower deployment of each shift, the Department was planning to train 280 more fire service members. As works were still being carried out at some places of the Fire Service Training School, the training provided to the special rescue squads of the Ambulance Command had to be conducted later.

9. Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)

9.1 During the period between 1999 and 2001, there were a total of 5 successful cases of using CPR skills to save lives of aged people by the staff of elderly homes. The Department has not yet received the figures for the period from January 2002 till now.

9.2 A member commented that the one-day CPR training course was too short. The Department replied that the one-day course was long enough for trainees to grasp the basic first aid knowledge, because the course covered both the theoretical and the practical parts. The

Department would consider lengthening the training duration, if necessary.

- 9.3 A member opined that the Fire Services Department had put a lot of resources in the CPR training, and he suggested that the Department should provide refresher course to those who had been trained to improve their first aid knowledge. The Department informed that they were considering to arrange for FSAs to act as CPR instructors so as to make better use of resources in the districts.
- 9.4 A member indicated that the Fire Services Department had been issuing CPR certificates too indiscriminately, and there were no expiry dates for the certificates. It was suggested that the Department should consider referring CPR training applicants to the Hong Kong Red Cross or Auxiliary Medical Service for training. The Department explained that the purpose of promoting CPR training was to impart basic first aid knowledge to the public, so that they could provide pre-hospital first aid treatment to patients if necessary, thus greatly increasing their survival rate. The public could attend refresher courses by themselves to enhance their first aid knowledge. If the training provided to the public was too complicated, perhaps some of the trainees might not be able to fully understand the contents of the course. As to issuing certificates to trainees after they had completed the CPR training, it was purely a kind of encouragement and did not mean that the trainees had obtained any professional qualification.
- 9.5 In response to a member's enquiry, the Department replied that the elderly home staff who had saved the lives of aged people by apply CPR skills had been commended by the Chief Ambulance Officer.

10. Out-of-Service Arrangements for Fireboat A.G.

At present, the Department was still discussing with a developer about placing Fireboat A.G. in the theme park under planning in Ma Wan for public display. However, since the developer only agreed to bear the related construction costs but not the repair costs in future, it was unlikely that the project would be implemented. Therefore, the Department had contacted the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) and considered that declaring Fireboat A.G. as an antiquity was a more suitable arrangement. The LCSD was conducting a feasibility study on the site for placing the Fireboat after the declaration and the costs incurred.

11. Development and Implementation of Training Programme for Emergency Medical Assistants (EMA)s

- 11.1 The Department had begun to provide EMA II Training for Senior/Principal Ambulancemen

since 2 April 2002. The skills were introduced from Canada. It was hoped that an additional 500 EMA IIs would be trained within three years and the training would be completed by April 2005. Professional certificates would be awarded to those who had completed training. After the full implementation of Paramedic Ambulance Service (PAS), each ambulance would be manned by an ambulance crew member with EMA II qualification.

11.2 In response to a member's enquiry, the Department indicated that the newly appointed ambulancemen were already in possession of EMA I qualification and EMA II training would be provided to Senior/Principal Ambulancemen in phases within the next three years. In order to cope with the public demand for PAS, the Department would train some Ambulance Officers as EMAs III so that they can serve as the trainers of EMA II training programmes.

12. Fitting and Commissioning Date of Fireboat Elite

Fireboat Elite was not undergoing sea trial. The manufacturer was now testing the performance of the boat and training staff of the Department on the operation of the fireboat. Fireboat Elite was expected to be commissioned in May 2002. The Department was planning to replace Fireboat 6 and was inviting tenders.

13. Samples of New Helmet and Protective Clothing for Ambulancemen

The Department was still looking for other samples of helmets in the market for comparison. Initial assessment had been made. Besides, 150 chemical protection suits were procured and placed in the Hazmat Tender for ambulancemen's use. Members had inspected the protection suits at the drill yard before the meeting.

14. Upset Price of Unwanted Fire Appliances to be Auctioned

At the auction held recently, the Government Supplies Department had set the upset price of unwanted fire appliances.

15. Raising the Fire Safety Awareness of Philippina Domestic Helpers

There were a number of Philippina domestic helper associations in Hong Kong. The Department had sent letters to the biggest union of Philippina domestic helpers on 15 March 2002, expressing the Department's intention to arrange fire safety talks for Philippina domestic

helpers. However, the reply from the union was still awaited. As Hong Kong was a democratic society, it would be quite difficult to impose fire safety training on Philippina domestic helpers.

16. Upgrading Fire Safety in Old Buildings

As there were quite a number of old buildings which did not comply with existing fire safety standards, the Department expressed that the Government should draft the Fire Safety (Buildings) Bill, requiring owners to improve the fire safety facilities of their buildings so as to protect the life and property of the general public.

17. Establishment of Owners' Corporations

According to the Building Management Ordinance, the Secretary for Home Affairs could mandatorily require owners of mismanaged private buildings to appoint property management agencies for improving private housing management.

18. Increasing the Number of Fire Station Open Days

As for the proposal of holding fire services exhibitions to enhance the international image of the Department, the Department expressed that the targets of open days and fire services exhibitions were different. Fire station open days were more suitable for the general public and the arrangements of holding fire services exhibitions were to be determined by the Institution of Fire Engineers (Hong Kong Branch) rather than by the Department. The Department would provide assistance only.

Any Other Business

19. Provision of Psychological Counselling for Front-line Staff

In response to a member's enquiry on whether psychological counseling should be provided for the fire services staff who handled charcoal-burning suicide cases recently, the Department indicated that psychological counselling would be provided for needy staff according to the seriousness of the incident. As charcoal-burning suicides were very common in Hong Kong, generally there was no need to provide psychological counselling for the staff. Instead, those fire personnel who could not save the lives of people jumping from a height always needed

psychological counselling. If the patients were certified dead, the Department would request the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) to deploy coffin vans to convey the dead bodies. The Fire Services Department had laid down instructions for ambulancemen to follow when handling dead bodies.

20. CD-ROMs for Publicizing Fire Safety Awareness

In response to the suggestion of producing CD-ROMs for publicizing fire safety awareness, the Department indicated that the general public could obtain fire prevention information very easily through the Department's website due to the popularization of information technology. The production of CD-ROMs might not be cost-effective. A member asked which unit was responsible for conducting fire drills in public housing estates, the Department stated that the general public had the responsibility to initiate requests of conducting fire drills to the Mutual Aid Committee (MAC) in their estates and the MAC could in turn seek help from the fire stations in the district.

21. Relation between the Design of Fire Appliances and Traffic Accidents involving Fire Appliances

A member enquired whether there was any relation between the recent traffic accidents involving fire appliances and the design of fire appliances, the Department indicated that the design of fire appliances would continue to be examined and modified and new models would be introduced from overseas. To avoid traffic accidents, upgrading drivers' driving skills was much more important than improving the design of the vehicle. The Department considered that the design of the service rescue vehicles should suit local environmental and be cost-effective.

22. Civic Education

A member considered civic education very important and cited the Police's example of sending staff to schools to teach students about road safety. The Department indicated that the Police had designed staff responsible for such kind of work in the establishment. Although the Department agreed that fire safety awareness could be promoted at the school level, no designated posts were created. At present, the Department and the Education Department (ED) were jointly organizing an activity known as "SMART TEEN" for junior secondary students. The participants would attend a one-week course which covered disciplinary training and fire safety knowledge. The Department considered it a very successful programme and the results satisfactory.

23. Importance of Smoke Lobby Door

A member asked what action should be taken when smoke lobby doors inside buildings were damaged or were not closed properly, the Department indicated the importance of smoke lobby doors by citing the examples of major fires in the early years. Smoke lobby doors were within the purview of the Buildings Department (BD) and the Fire Services Department was responsible for the fire services installations (FSI) inside buildings, such as jets, sprinkler system and so on. Members of the public can report the above irregularities to the Fire Services Department by dialing the hotline 2723 8787. The Department would issue Fire Hazard Abatement Notice to the owner of the building if contravention to Fire Services regulations was found.

24. Traffic Accidents Involving Ambulances

In response to a member's enquiry on whether there were claims lodged by families of those whose died in traffic accidents involving ambulances, the Department expressed that no such claims had been received so far.

25. There being no other business. The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

Fire Services Department
June 2002