

The 9th Fire Services Department Public Liaison Group

Notes of the Second Meeting

The second meeting of the 9th Public Liaison Group was held at the multi-purpose hall on G/F, Fire Services Headquarters Building at 7 p.m. on 27 September 2002.

Confirmation of the Notes of the Last Meeting

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

3. Activities of the Public Liaison Group

3.1 The Fire Services Department stated that arrangements had been made for members to attend the press briefing on change of new working dress for ambulance personnel and the 132nd passing-out parade held on 5 July and 23 August 2002 respectively. Besides holding meetings with members, the Department had also arranged various kinds of activities for them. Last year, members viewed the shooting of the TV series "Burning Flames II" at Television Broadcasts Limited, visited the Airport Fire Station and went to a barbecue at Fire Services Training School, etc. The Department welcomed all members to attend the Ambulancemen Passing-out Parade in late October, as well as the fire prevention and ambulance service promotional activities in November.

3.2 Members suggested arranging visits to Fireboat Elite, Airport Sub-fire Station and Lamma Island Fire Station. The Department indicated that Airport Main Fire Station and Sub-fire Station were inside the restricted area and their facilities were very much the same. If members chose to visit Airport Fire Station in the morning, the Department could arrange a barbecue for them at the Fire Services Training School in the afternoon. Members could each bring a guest, but the Department would only bear the barbecue costs for members and the guests would join the barbecue at their own expense at about HK\$ 50 each. In response to a member's enquiry, the Department replied that it took a long time to prepare for backdraught and flashover demonstrations. If members were interested, arrangements could be made to view relevant videotapes and visit the training facilities.

- 3.3 After discussion, the meeting considered it would be too hasty to visit Airport Fire Station and go to Lamma Island by fireboat on the same day. Therefore, it was resolved that a visit to Airport Fire Station and training facilities at Fire Services Training School, as well as barbecue at Fire Services Training School would be held on 27 October. Members could each bring a guest, and use camera or video camera to record the visit. The Secretary would contact members after the meeting. Besides, the Department would fix another date for a visit to Lamma Island Fire Station.
- 3.4 In response to an observer's enquiry, the Department replied that the activities were organized for Public Liaison Group members. If there were any vacancies, applications from observers would be considered.

Matters Arising from Previous Meeting

4. Performance Pledge

The Fire Services Department stated that pamphlets of "Fire Services Department Performance Pledge 2002" were tabled for members' reference. Its contents had also been uploaded onto the Department's web page.

5. Establishment of Special Rescue Squads

- 5.1 The Fire Services Department stated that 257 members of Ambulance Command had already received special rescue training as at 31 August 2002. The long-term objective of establishing special rescue squads was to provide each Major Rescue Unit with two teams of members who had undergone special rescue training, so as to increase flexibility of manpower deployment.
- 5.2 In response to members' enquiries, the Department replied that most of the ambulance personnel found the new working dress satisfactory and its new design convenient for carrying out duties. When a member expressed his views on the fire appliances used by special rescue squads, he declared his occupation as requested by the Department. He was working in a fire services system company and he had suggested his company selling fire services equipment to the Department. He emphasized that although he personally had the procurement of fire services equipment, he was not engaged in the

business in view of his role as a Public Liaison Group member. All fire appliances had been directly sold to the users by the manufacturer and he personally had not earned any commission. He also distributed fire services magazine of different countries to clients in Hong Kong. He suggested that the Department should get a better understanding of the products on the market, and did not need to purchase a large number of fire appliances hastily in one go. The Department explained that it needed to replace fire appliances annually and the purchase had to be made through open tender by the Government Supplies Department. Apart from observing established government procedures, the Fire Services Department also had to ensure the procurement procedures were completed within the financial year with the funds allocated and the purchase was made with the funds. The Department purchased different appliances every year, and the models, price and manufactures were determined by the tender result. The Department had no right to choose in advance, but the design of the appliances would fulfill operation needs.

5.3 Members enquired the special turnout record of special rescue squads since their establishment in April. The Department stated that special rescue squads had taken part in the rescue operation of the building collapse incident at Yau Tong, and the fire personnel involved had been awarded Director's Commendation.

6. Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)

6.1 The Fire Services Department indicated that from January 2002 up till now, it had not received any report on saving of lives by resuscitation by those who had received community CPR training. From January to August 2002, the Department had provided community CPR training and CRP refresher training for 3,419 and 328 persons respectively. At present, there were adequate ambulance personnel serving as CPR instructors. Therefore, it was not necessary to arrange for Fire Safety Ambassadors to serve as instructors.

6.2 In response to members' enquiries, the Department replied that there was currently a CPR training course venue on Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and the New Territories, located in Sai Wan Ho, Yau Ma Tei and Ma On Shan respectively. The response to these courses had been goods. Ma On Shan Ambulance Command Training School

was selected as the training venue for the New Territories Region because it was provided with training facilities and the response to courses held there had been good. Members suggested that they could refer to activity details of the Fire Safety Ambassador Newsletters for reference, or contact divisional fire stations. In response to a member's suggestion, the Department replied that organization of fire safety activities had been devolved from Fire Prevention Bureau to sub-fire stations in the districts due to changes in policy.

6.3 In response to members' enquiries, the Department replied that CPR certificates were of a permanent nature. Trainees might apply for refresher courses if necessary.

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

Members were informed that it was not possible to place Fireboat A.G. in the Hong Kong Museum of Coastal Defense due to various technical problems. Later, after continuous searching for a suitable location, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department and the Architectural Services Department considered that Quarry Bay Park was a possible location for placing Fireboat A.G. A feasibility study was being conducted at the moment.

8. Development and Implementation of Paramedic Ambulance Services (PAS)

Members noted that the aim of FSD was to train all Senior / Principal Ambulancemen as Emergency Medical Assistants (EMAs) within three years. Currently, among 784 Principal/Senior Ambulancemen in the establishment of ambulance supervisors, 384 (or 49%) of them had been qualified as EMA IIs. On average, 8 PAS courses were conducted annually for training 192 ambulance personnel as qualified EMA IIs. It was expected that about 60% of FSD ambulances could provide PAS by the end of the first quarters of 2003 and this ratio would increase to 80% and 100% by the end of the first quarter of 2004 and 2005 respectively. In response to a member's enquiry, the Department stated that the PAS was developing smoothly.

9. Fitting and Commissioning Date of Fireboat Elite

The Department indicated that Fireboat Elite had been commissioned on 12 May this year. On the other hand, the Department had contacted the Marine

Department on the replacement of Fireboat 6 and open tenders had been invited on 20 September this year.

10. Samples of New Helmets and Protective Clothing for Ambulancemen

Members were informed that ambulancemen had tried on several types of helmets for choosing the suitable one. The Government Supplies Department was preparing to invite tenders for the FSD for the acquisition of new helmets for ambulancemen. In response to a member's enquiry, the Department indicated that the colour red would still be adopted for the new helmet.

11. Raising the Fire Safety Awareness of Philippina Domestic Helpers

The Department indicated that a seminar on fire safety and safe use of electricity had been conducted collaboratively with the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department through the arrangement of the Philippina domestic helper associations. The Department would maintain contact with the associations for further arrangement of seminars on fire safety for Philippina domestic helpers when necessary.

12. Upgrading Fire Safety in Old Buildings

12.1 The Department stated that the Fire Safety (Buildings) Bill was passed in the third reading by the Legislative Council on 3 July this year and the Fire Safety Command was introducing the new legislation to District Fire Safety Committees. The official effective date of the Fire Safety (Buildings) Ordinance would be fixed, pending the endorsement of the Building Management Ordinance by the Legislative Council which would allow owners' corporations of buildings to obtain government loan.

12.2 In response to a member's enquiry on whether inspections had been conducted at the building in Li Yuen Street East where No. 3 alarm fire had occurred recently, the Department expressed that due to the limits of its jurisdiction, only public or commercial premises would be inspected. As for the inspection of domestic premises, sufficient grounds was needed and prior approval of the residents concerned had to be obtained. Members agreed to delete this item from the agenda of the next meeting.

13. Establishment of Owners' Corporations

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

14. Increasing the Number of Fire Station Open Days

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

15. Provision of Psychological Counselling for Front-line Staff

15.1 In response to a member's enquiry on whether the 911 tragedy had any psychological impacts on fire personnel, the Department said that no abnormal behavior was found among the fire personnel in Hong Kong. The fire personnel should assess the objective environmental factors and consider whether the trapped persons could be rescued rather than preparing to sacrifice themselves when entering the fire scene, which would only cause more casualties. The Department had learnt a big lesson from the 911 tragedy i.e., all aspects of precautions had to be stepped up, especially the precaution against anthrax bacillus.

15.2 A member suggested that the Department should learn from the fire personnel of the Middle East on the handling of incidents similar to the 911 Incident, i.e. carrying out rescue operations outside buildings by means of equipment (e.g. ladder). The Department stated that Hong Kong was packed with high-rise buildings and the local geographical environment was different from that of the Middle East. In the 911 Incident, the collapse of buildings was caused by the softening of steel as a result of excessively high temperature. However, no single building in Hong Kong was similar to the World Trade Centre as far as building structure was concerned.

16. CD-ROMs for Publicizing Fire Safety Awareness

A member expressed that the existing government API on hill fire prevention could not impress children strongly and suggested that a new one should be designed by the Department. The Department revealed that the API was produced by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department. The Department would pass his view to the AFCD. On the other hand, a new API on fire prevention would soon be shown on TV.

17. Relation between the Design of Fire Appliances and Traffic Accidents Involving Fire Appliances.

A member opined that with the rapid development of ambulance service and the procurement of BMW ambulance aid motorcycles in recent years, Hong Kong could keep up with other countries such as Germany and Austria and that was a good phenomenon. The Department thanked him for his praise.

18. Civic Education

18.1 The Department stated that concerning the “SMART TEEN” activities jointly organized by the Department and the Education Department, more than a thousand junior secondary students had received fire safety training. Feedback from the teachers and students who took part in the activities was good.

18.2 The Department indicated that a large-scale promotional activity known as “Ambulance Service Campaign” would be launched by the Ambulance Command at the piazza of Hong Kong Science Museum on 24 November 2002 and the main points of the campaign were introduced. In order to highlight the publicity campaign this year, “A Caring Heart” Computer Screen Saver Design Competition would be held. The rules of competition and application forms would be distributed to secondary schools in the territory through the Education Department to invite students to participate. The deadline for submissions to the competition would be 1 November and the prize presentation would be held on 24 November, as an event of the “Ambulance Service Campaign”. Members who wished to obtain application forms should contact the Secretary.

19. Importance of Smoke Lobby Doors

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

20. Traffic Accidents Involving Ambulances

The Department stated that the number of traffic accidents involving ambulances and ambulance aid motorcycles from January to August 2002 was 76 and 16 respectively. In response to a member’s enquiry, the

Department expressed that most of the traffic accidents happened under different road conditions.

New Items

21. Servicing of Hydraulic Platform

21.1 The Department indicated that at present there were 69 hydraulic platforms. Maintenance and inspection works were carried out every 4 months, and the average serviceable life of a hydraulic platform was 15 years. In case a hydraulic platform broke down during an operation, the Department would immediately deploy another hydraulic platform from the nearest fire station. If the cage of the hydraulic platform became defective after ascending and was unable to descend, the fire personnel could use the emergency manual pump to get the cage down.

21.2 In response to a member's enquiry, the Department indicated that the fire personnel inspected the hydraulic platforms daily, and in the process of replacement, new and old models of hydraulic platforms would exist side by side, but hydraulic platforms rarely broke down during an operation. The Department was now making arrangements for the introduction of an aerial ladder platform, but the acquisition of additional aerial ladder platforms would depend on the suitability of the appliance.

21.3 A member expressed his views on fire appliances, but because of the conflict of interests on his part, the topic was not discussed in depth in the meeting.

22. Resuce Work of the Airport Command Boat

The Fire Services Department indicated that in 2002-03, one of the Enhanced Productivity initiatives was to cut back on the establishment of each duty shift of the Airport Command Boat from 9 to 8 staff by reallocation of duties, provision of more training for the staff as well as promotion of cooperation among them, without jeopardizing the operational performance of the fire personnel and quality of service. Normal operation of the Airport Command Boat would not be affected by the adjustment of the establishment.

23. Customer Satisfaction Survey

23.1 The Department said that 17 questionnaires on Customer Satisfaction Survey were returned. The results indicated that the majority of members were satisfied with the current role played by the Group as well as the existing communication channels. The Department also welcomed members to express their views for discussion.

23.2 A member opined that as a means of communication, organizing activities would be better than holding meetings. It was suggested that the Department should organize visits to fire stations in the Mainland for exchange purposes, and related expenses would be borne by the participants. In response to the above suggestion, the Department indicated that they might consider organizing a visit to the task force of Shenzhen for members, but the date had to be fixed at the convenience of the Shenzhen counterparts, and normally it would not fall on a Saturday; moreover, there had to be over 15 participants, who would not be allowed to bring along children. As for the details of the activity, the Department would contact members in due course.

Any Other Business

24. Visit to the Diving Unit

A member said that he wished to visit the Diving Unit so as to understand their work. The Department indicated that facilities used by the Diving Unit could also be found on board Fireboat Elite.

25. Commendation of Fireman

In response to a member's enquiry, the Department indicated that a Letter of Appreciation had been issued to the fireman who took part in the rescue of two sisters in the No. 3 alarm fire at Yuet Wah Street, Kwun Tong on 3 June 2002.

26. Director's Farewell Parade

In response to members' enquiry as to whether the Director's Farewell Parade would be held, the Department indicated that whether such arrangements

would be made hinged on the Director's preference.

27. New Fire Stations

In response to a member's enquiry, the Department indicated that three new fire stations located at Ma Wan, Tai Chik Sha and Lau Fau Shan respectively would come into operation.

28. Road Layout

In response to a member's enquiry about the layout of the Tolo Harbour Highway for emergency situations, the Department indicated that according to the requirements set by the Transport Department, the barrier erected on the side of a highway should have an opening in order to cope with emergencies.

29. A member suggested that the Department made use of publicity vans to step up publicity work. The Department indicated that a brand new fire protection publicity van would come into operation in mid-November. As for the commissioning of additional publicity vans, factors like effectiveness and resources had to be considered.

30. There being no other business. The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

Fire Services Department
October 2002

