

The Fire Services Department provides emergency and rescue services for the public and is responsible for firefighting and rescue on land and at sea. It also provides emergency ambulance services for the sick and the injured, and gives advice on fire protection measures and fire hazards to the public.

Organisation: In 2020, the Department has 10,417 uniformed and 795 civilian members. It comprises three Operational Commands (as in May 2021, it comprises four Operational Commands), a Licensing and Certification Command, a Fire Safety Command, an Ambulance Command, a Headquarters Command and an Administration Division. The head of the Department is the Director of Fire Services.

Fire and Special Services: Firefighting, rescue and other emergency services are undertaken by the three Operational Commands. They are Hong Kong Island (including marine and off-shore islands), Kowloon and the New Territories (the New Territories Commands was divided into New Territories North and New Territories South in May 2021). In 2020, they responded to 33,632 fire calls and 32,358 special service calls.

In 2020, fires claimed 24 lives and injured 307 persons. Accidents occurred during cooking, careless handling of lighted materials (such as cigarette ends, matches and candles) and electrical faults were the major causes of fires.

Special service calls cover a wide range of incidents, including traffic and industrial accidents, gas leakages, landslides, flooding, house collapses, attempts to jump from heights and malfunctioning lifts.

The Department has 655 operational appliances and vehicles fitted with up-to-date firefighting and rescue equipment. The frontline appliances, basically comprising hydraulic platforms, major pumps, light rescue units and turntable ladders, are supported where necessary by other special appliances/equipment. A fleet of 25 vessels provides firefighting and rescue services within Hong Kong waters.

Ambulance Services: The Ambulance Command operates 406 ambulances, four Mobile Casualty Treatment Centres, 41 Emergency Medical Assistant Motorcycles, four Rapid Response Vehicles and other supporting vehicles. All ambulance vehicles are equipped with paramedic facilities.

In 2020, the Command responded to 689,788 calls, representing an average of 1,885 calls a day, and conveyed a total of 612,797 casualties or patients to hospitals or clinics.

To enhance the emergency ambulance services (EAS), the Department has been gradually offering post-dispatch advice (PDA) by phone since May 2011 on six common types of injuries and sicknesses (bleeding, burns, fracture/dislocation of limbs, convulsion, heat exposure and hypothermia) after dispatching ambulances to scenes. To further enhance the EAS, the Department introduced a new computer system in October 2018 for the provision of PDA, which incorporated an internationally-accredited questioning protocol software designed to provide EAS callers with immediate, comprehensive and appropriate advice to help stabilise patients based on the conditions of their injuries and sickness. The number of injury and sickness types on which advice is given has now risen to over 30, covering, among others, traumatic injuries, choking, unconscious/fainting and cardiac or respiratory arrest.

Frontline firemen are also trained as first responders to provide basic life support for casualties and patients before the arrival of ambulance crews. First responders are now available in all fire stations throughout the territory. In 2020, the first responders turned out for 24,881 cases.

Communications: The Fire Services Communications Centre (FSCC) is equipped with a computerised mobilising system for the efficient and effective mobilising of firefighting and ambulance resources for fires and emergencies. The system is linked to all fire stations, ambulance depots and fireboat stations for dispatch of resources.

The FSCC has adopted a sophisticated telecommunication and computer integrated mobilising system – the Third Generation Mobilising System – to improve the efficiency of firefighting and rescue operations by enhancing the identification, location and mobilisation of resources.

The use of Digital Trunked Radio System ensures effective and efficient radio communication at incident scenes.

The FSCC, which operates round-the-clock, is also responsible for handling complaints and enquiries about fire hazards and dangerous goods. During major incidents, it acts as an emergency coordinator for government departments and public utilities. The Department has six Mobile Command Units, which serve as on-scene command and control centres in major incidents.

Licensing and Certification: The Licensing and Certification Command formulates and enforces fire safety regulations and policies, and processes the registration of fire service installation contractors.

The Policy Division formulates procedural instructions and guidelines on fire protection matters, conducts researches on relevant issues, accepts fire service installations and equipment, and approves portable firefighting equipment. It also handles legal and prosecution matters related to fire safety and protection.

The Dangerous Goods Legislation Division is responsible for reviewing the Dangerous Goods Ordinance (DGO) and its subsidiary legislation. It also formulates policies on public education and oversees all projects and programmes relating to Dangerous Goods, and approves gas cylinders under the DGO.

The Dangerous Goods Division is responsible for the licensing of dangerous goods stores and vehicles, and timber stores; handles complaints regarding over storage of dangerous goods and illicit fuelling activities.

The Fire Service Installations Task Force inspects fire service installations in buildings; handles complaints regarding building fire service installations and monitors the performance of registered fire service installations contractors.

The Fire Service Installations Division and the Ventilation Division are responsible for inspecting fire service installations and ventilating systems in buildings respectively. The latter also approves fusible links and electrostatic filters/precipitators used in ventilating systems and assists the Buildings Department in processing the registration of Specialist Contractors (Ventilation Works).

The Licensing Division is responsible for advising other government authorities on fire safety measures for the purposes of licensing/registering various types of premises and investigating complaints about fire safety in licensed/registered premises.

The Licensing Authority Division comprises officers seconded to the Office of Licensing Authority (OLA) of the Home Affairs Department to assist in the licensing of hotels, guesthouses, clubs, karaoke establishments and bedspace apartments as well as in dealing with enforcement and prosecution matters under the jurisdiction of the OLA.

Some officers of the Command are seconded to the Social Welfare Department to advise on fire protection measures in residential care homes for the elderly and residential care homes for persons with disabilities.

Fire Safety: The Fire Safety Command draws up fire safety policies and formulates fire safety measures for buildings, and is committed to upgrading the fire safety standard of old buildings. It also vets loan applications for fire safety improvement works and raises public awareness of fire safety.

The three Building Improvement Divisions under the Command are responsible for upgrading fire safety measures for various types of buildings in Hong Kong and investigating complaints about fire safety in buildings. They also conduct proactive fire safety inspections of various types of buildings and premises.

The New Projects Division vets new and amended building plans of projects, including those of tunnels, bridges and the airport, in conjunction with the Buildings Department and other government departments. It also formulates fire protection requirements that meet the needs of such premises and cope with relevant risks.

The Airport Expansion Project Division processes statutory submissions relating to the Three-runway System project of Hong Kong International Airport which include vetting of General Building Plans and fire service installations (FSI) drawings, scrutinizing fire engineering reports and giving advice on fire safety measures. It also conducts FSI acceptance inspections for the project to ensure the FSI compliance with the statutory requirements.

The Railway Development Strategy Division formulates and scrutinises fire safety requirements for new and existing railway infrastructure projects. It has been actively participating in the planning, design and improvement works of various railway projects by offering fire protection advice to the MTR Corporation and its consultants.

The Community Emergency Preparedness Division draws up community emergency preparedness strategies on, among others, disaster preparedness, counter-terrorism preparedness, fire safety and community life support. It also reaches out to different age and community groups through social media, training courses and advertisements, with an aim to raising public awareness of emergency preparedness, strengthening their response capabilities in case of danger or emergencies such as natural disasters and terrorist attacks, as well as enhancing their knowledge of fire prevention, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, the use of automated external defibrillators and proper use of Ambulance Service.

The Support Division formulates, reviews and updates policies on building fire safety improvement and undertakes the preparatory work for introducing legislation. It also handles general enquiries and provides general fire safety advice to the public.

Administration and Logistical Support: The Headquarters Command provides policy, planning, management and logistical support for the Operational Commands. It also oversees the operation of the FSCC and the Fire and Ambulance Services Academy, as well as issues related to recruitment and examination, information technology, workshops and transport, occupational safety and health, procurement and logistics, physical training, information and publicity, psychological services, staff welfare and statistics.

The Administration Division, supported by civilian staff, is responsible for matters related to departmental establishment, personnel, finance, appointments, general administration, staff relations, internal audit and translation.

Airport Fire Contingent: The primary role of the contingent is to provide rescue and firefighting coverage for the Hong Kong International Airport. The contingent, comprising two fire stations and two sea rescue berths at strategic locations on the airport platform, is equipped with 14 fire appliances, two ambulances, two command boats and eight speedboats.

Diving Services: The Department has about 150 active divers, of which 120 are stationed in the Diving Unit and 30 in the Airport Fire Contingent. The Diving Unit is responsible for all aquatic search and rescue operations within Hong Kong waters down to a maximum depth of 70 metres using compressed air diving equipment and underwater breaking-in tools. The Unit also operates a three-compartment compression chamber on Stonecutters Island for treating patients suffering from decompression illness and requiring hyperbaric oxygen treatment.

The FSD Diving Base on Stonecutters Island is equipped with a range of advanced and professional training facilities to enhance the search and rescue skills of Service divers.

Training: The Fire and Ambulance Services Academy provides foundation firefighting and rescue training for recruits as well as refresher and advanced training courses for all fire personnel. It also conducts foundation and paramedic training for recruits and ambulance personnel. Besides, Advanced Ambulance Aid Training at the first responder level is offered to serving fire personnel.

The fire and ambulance recruits who have successfully completed a 26-week foundation training will be posted to fire stations and ambulance depots respectively to continue their on-the-job training in order to gain field experience.

Apart from providing training for staff of the Department, the Academy also provides basic firefighting, fire safety and Ambulance Aid training for personnel of other government departments, private organisations and advanced courses for the overseas/mainland counterparts. Furthermore, the Academy runs an Enhanced Smart Teen Project for youngsters jointly with the Education Bureau.

In addition, officers also attend overseas training on the latest fire services technology, paramedic and management skills on a regular basis.

Workshops: The Workshops and Transport Division is responsible for all engineering matters related to fire appliances as well as firefighting and rescue equipment. These include design, development, procurement, inspection and maintenance, fitting out, modification, testing and commissioning.

Response Time: There are 82 fire stations, 40 ambulance depots, six fireboat stations, two sea rescue berths and a diving base strategically located to provide emergency responses for all areas within designated response times. The graded response time for building fire calls is six minutes for built-up areas and nine to 23 minutes for areas of dispersed risks and isolated developments. For emergency ambulance calls, the target response time is 12 minutes. The Department pledges to achieve the targets in 92.5% of the building fire calls in built-up areas, 94.5% of the building fire calls in areas of dispersed risks and isolated developments, and 92.5% of all emergency ambulance calls.

Public Liaison Group: The group, which comprises 30 members of the public from all walks of life, helps promote better understanding of the work of the Department among the public. It also makes suggestions for improving the delivery of the Department's public services.