



# HONG KONG : THE FACTS



## Fire Services

The Fire Services Department is an emergency service responsible for fire-fighting and rescue on land and at sea. It also provides an emergency ambulance service for the sick and the injured, and gives fire protection advice to the public.

**Organisation:** The Department has 9 515 uniformed and 725 civilian members. It is organised into seven commands – three Operational Commands, a Licensing and Certification Command, a Fire Safety Command, an Ambulance Command, a Headquarters Command and an Administration Division. Commanding the Department is the Director of Fire Services.

**Fire and Special Services:** Fire-fighting, rescue and other emergency services are undertaken by the three Operational Commands – Hong Kong (including marine and off-shore islands), Kowloon and the New Territories. In 2015, they responded to 34 320 fire calls and 33 683 special service calls.

In 2015, accidents occurring during the preparation of foodstuffs, careless handling of lighted items (such as cigarette ends, matches, candles and joss sticks) and electrical faults contributed to the major cause of fires. Fires claimed 23 lives and 320 injuries.

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

The Department has 610 operational appliances and vehicles fitted with up-to-date fire-fighting and rescue equipment. The frontline appliances, basically comprising hydraulic platforms, major pumps, light rescue units and turntable ladders/snorkels, are supported where necessary by other special appliances/equipment. A fleet of 21 vessels provides firefighting and rescue services within Hong Kong waters.

**Ambulance Services:** The Ambulance Command operates 371 ambulances, four Mobile Casualty Treatment Centres, 36 Emergency Medical Assistant Motorcycles, two Rapid Response Vehicles and other supporting vehicles. All ambulances and motorcycles are equipped with paramedic facilities.

In 2015, the Command responded to 757 901 calls, representing an average of 2 076 calls a day, and conveying a total of 679 912 patients or casualties to hospitals/clinics.

To enhance the emergency ambulance service, the Department provides simple Post-dispatch Advice (PDA) by phone on some easily identified emergency conditions (general bleeding, bone fractures/dislocation to limbs, burns, convulsion, heat exposure and hypothermia) after dispatching ambulances to scenes. The PDA includes simple first-aid and time-saving advice to facilitate the provision of prompt medical assistance to patients.

Frontline firemen are also trained as first responders to provide basic life support to casualties and patients

before the arrivals of ambulance crews. First responders are now available in all fire stations throughout the territory. In 2015, the first responders turned out for 40 022 cases.

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

The FSCC, manned round the clock, also caters for receipt of complaints and enquiries of fire hazards and dangerous goods. During major incidents, it acts as a coordinator for Government departments and public utilities. The Department has five Mobile Command Units which serve as on-scene command and control centres in major incidents. The FSCC has adopted a sophisticated tele-communication and computer integrated mobilising system – the Third Generation Mobilising System – to improve the efficiency of fire-fighting 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.

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

The Policy Division formulates procedural instructions and guidelines on fire protection matters, researches and approves fire service installations, portable fire-fighting equipment and gas cylinders. It also handles legal and prosecution matters.

The Dangerous Goods Division is responsible for the licensing of dangerous goods stores and vehicles, and timber stores.

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 two Regional Offices (namely the Hong Kong and Kowloon West, and the New Territories and Kowloon East) are responsible for advising other government authorities on the fire safety measures for the purposes of licensing/registering various types of 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, private 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 (FS 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 two 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 of buildings. A Special Enforcement Unit has been set up to actively inspect old buildings and take enforcement actions against irregularities.

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 can meet the needs of such premises and cope with relevant risks.

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 Support Division formulates, reviews and updates departmental policies on improvement of fire safety of buildings. It is committed to enhancing public knowledge of fire protection. It coordinates the production of publicity materials for TV and radio broadcasts as well as leaflets, posters, pamphlets, mobile applications and exhibits on fire safety. It also works closely with local fire stations in organising fire safety talks, seminars, fire safety exhibitions and fire drills.

The FS Command launched a number of schemes to promote fire safety, including the Building Fire Safety Envoy Scheme to encourage public participation in safeguarding the fire safety of buildings where they live or work; the Fire Safety Education in Kindergartens Programme to foster the correct fire safety concept for pre-school children; and the Fire Safety Ambassadors (FSA) Scheme to train volunteers from various sectors of the community to become FSA. To add impetus to the FSA Scheme, Fire Safety Ambassador Honorary Presidents' Associations are set up in 18 districts where local community leaders are appointed as the Honorary Presidents.

**Administration and Logistical Support:** The Headquarters Command offers policy, planning, management and logistical support to the Operational Commands. It also oversees the operation of Fire Services Communications Centre, Information Technology Management Unit, Fire and Ambulance Services Academy, recruitment and examination, workshops and transport, occupational safety and health, procurement and logistics, physical training, information and publicity matters, staff welfare and statistics.

The Administration Division, staffed by civilians, deals with departmental establishment, personnel,

finance, appointments, general matters, staff relations, audit and translation service.

**Airport Fire Contingent:** The primary role of the contingent is to provide rescue and fire fighting coverage for the Hong Kong International Airport. The contingent, which comprises 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 Diving Unit comprises about 150 active divers responsible for all aquatic search and rescue operations within Hong Kong waters down to the maximum depth of 42 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 basic and specialised fire-fighting and rescue training for recruits. It also provides refresher and advanced training courses for all fire personnel. The Academy also provides initial and paramedic training to recruits and ambulance personnel. It also provides Advanced Ambulance Aid Training at the first responder level to serving fire personnel.

The fire and ambulance recruits who have successfully completed a 26-week initial 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 other government departments, private organisations and overseas fire officers, the Academy also runs an Enhanced Smart Teen Challenge Project for youngsters jointly with the Education Bureau.

Besides, the Academy also arranges community cardio-pulmonary resuscitation training to members of the public and trains government staff on the use of automated external defibrillators.

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

**Workshops:** The Workshops Division is responsible for all engineering matters relating to fire appliances, fire-fighting and rescue equipment. These include design, development, procurement, inspection and maintenance, fitting out, modification, testing and commissioning.

**Response Times:** There are altogether 81 fire stations, 39 ambulance depots and six fireboat stations. They are strategically located to provide emergency responses for all areas. The graded response time for building fire calls is six minutes for built-up areas and nine to 23 minutes for areas of more dispersed risk/isolated developments. For emergency ambulance services, the target response time is 12 minutes. The performance target is to achieve the above in 92.5 per cent of all calls.

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