

財經事務及庫務局局長

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中區政府合署



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18 March 2009

URGENT BY FAX

Ms Miranda HON
Clerk, Public Accounts Committee
Legislative Council
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road
Central
Hong Kong

Dear Ms Hon,

**The Director of Audit's Report on the
results of value for money audits (Report No. 51)**

Emergency ambulance service (Chapter 4)

Thank you for your letter of 11 March 2009 requesting further information on the captioned subject. We have consulted the Security Bureau (SB) and other relevant departments for their input as appropriate. The information is set out below.

2008 Resource Allocation Exercise

In the 2008 Resource Allocation Exercise (RAE), approval was given for the Fire Services Department (FSD) to create 121 posts to strengthen its emergency ambulance service (EAS), close to the number of 130 additional

posts recommended by SB (the small difference is due to the consideration over fluctuations in EAS calls that affect the estimated demand for ambulance resources). The approval took into account various factors. First, the number of ambulance calls increased by 6.7% in the first half of 2008 when compared with that in the same period of 2007. Moreover, the average response time performance (RTP) in the first half of 2008 was 91.8% as compared with 92.9% in the corresponding period of 2007. In this connection, the effects of the publicity campaign launched by FSD in late 2007 on the proper use of EAS also appeared to be not as effective as the one launched in late 2005. In the first half of 2006, after the publicity campaign in November 2005, the number of calls dropped by more than 7% when compared with that of 2005. In light of all these factors, the Administration considered it necessary to approve additional resources for FSD to cope with the prevailing and increasing demand in EAS and meet the RTP pledge.

Relevant factors in identifying ambulances due for replacement

Unlike the replacement of general purpose government vehicles whereby recommendations are basically based on the Economic Life Model (ELM), recommendations for the replacement of ambulances are not confined to those generated from the ELM and may come from one or more of the following sources -

- (i) recommended for replacement by the ELM;
- (ii) identified to be in need of replacement by the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) after vehicle inspection; and
- (iii) considered to be in need of replacement by FSD having regard to its operational experience.

The process incorporates recommendations from different sources, with a view to ensuring that all ambulances which may be in need of replacement can be identified for further consideration. When considering the recommendations from these different sources, we have also made reference to the availability rate of individual ambulances.

Review on methodology of determining the number of ambulances to be replaced

In paragraph 6.11(b) of the Audit Report, the Director of Audit (D of A) has recommended that the Director of Fire Services (DFS) should review the methodology of determining the number of ambulances to be replaced, taking into account all relevant factors (in particular, the risk of the breakdown on rescue operations), to ensure the efficient provision of the emergency ambulance service. In response, DFS has undertaken to work out, in collaboration with EMSD and the Government Logistics Department, an objective methodology that is acceptable to all parties. We understand that FSD has already started discussions with the relevant departments. We will work with all parties concerned and provide input along the way. We hope that the review would be completed by the third quarter of 2009, as this would facilitate the preparation and assessment work in relation to FSD's bid, if any, for replacing its ambulances in the 2009 RAE. Meanwhile, we note that by 2010 when all replacement ambulances approved in recent years have been delivered by phases, over 80% of the ambulance fleet will be under two years old and the fleet's age will be reduced from the current average age of around 8 years to 1.7 years.

Yours sincerely,



(Ms Bernadette Linn)
for Secretary for Financial Services
and the Treasury

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