

**立法會**  
**Legislative Council**

LC Paper No. CB(2)767/18-19(06)

Ref : CB2/PL/SE

**Panel on Security**

**Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat  
for the meeting on 15 February 2019**

**Provision of post-dispatch advice by the Fire Services Department**

**Purpose**

This paper provides background information and summarizes past discussion of the Panel on Security ("the Panel") on issues relating to the provision of post-dispatch advice ("PDA") by the Fire Services Department ("FSD").

**Background**

2. Since 1 May 2011, FSD has been providing PDA to callers for the emergency ambulance service ("EAS") in respect of three common types of injury, including general bleeding, burns and dislocation/fracture of limbs. According to the Administration, the advice includes simple first-aid advice (such as cooling burn wounds with water and applying pressure to a bleeding wound with clean towel) and time-saving advice (such as reminding the caller to bring along the patient's medications and consultation summaries for doctors' reference at the Accident and Emergency Department of the public hospitals). FSD has begun to provide advice on two more types of sickness, namely convulsion and heat exposure, from 1 June 2012, and on hypothermia from 1 January 2013.

3. To further expand and enhance EAS, the Administration consulted the Panel in July 2014 on the development of a new computer system in FSD for the provision of PDA in the handling of emergency ambulance calls. According to the Administration, the proposed computer system would incorporate an internationally-accredited questioning protocol software to assist personnel of the Fire Services Communication Centre ("FSCC") in providing EAS callers with immediate, comprehensive and appropriate advice, to help stabilize patients based

on the conditions of their injuries and sicknesses. In addition, the proposed system would cover over 30 types of injury/sickness, including, among others, traumatic injuries, choking, unconscious/fainting and cardiac or respiratory arrest. The Finance Committee approved the relevant funding proposal in May 2015.

## **Members' deliberations**

### Provision of PDA under the new system

4. Some members expressed concern whether FSCC operators were required to possess basic medical knowledge and make any judgement in the provision of PDA under the new system. The Administration advised that FSCC operators would not be involved in making personal judgement but had to follow the instructions of the computer system and ask pre-structured questions. The questioning protocol incorporated in the system, which was developed by the International Academies of Emergency Dispatch ("IAED"), had been clinically approved. The status of IAED as a standard-bearer in the field had been recognized by professional organizations such as the American Heart Association, the American College of Emergency Physicians and the American Medical Association. The Administration further advised that similar computer systems and questioning protocols had been adopted by some 3 000 mobilizing centres of emergency services in more than 40 countries or regions for over 30 years, and had been effective in enhancing EAS as shown by overseas experiences. To ensure the quality of PDA service, FSCC operators were required to receive dedicated training and hold valid Emergency Medical Dispatcher Certificates before they were authorized to provide the service.

5. Some members were concerned about the legal responsibility borne by the caller or operator of FSCC if a caller did not follow the advice provided by the later. The Administration advised that callers might decide on their own whether to listen to and follow the advice provided by the call-taker. It was stressed that the pre-structured questions under the questioning protocol was simple and easy to understand and would facilitate ambulance crew in making early preparation for the immediate provision of appropriate treatment to patients upon arrival at the scene. Members were further advised that overseas experience was positive and FSD was not aware of any successful litigation to claim for damages relating to provision of PDA.

6. Noting that the new system would cover 33 types of injury and sickness, some members expressed concern about the update of the questioning protocol. The Administration advised that the expected service lifespan of the new system

was about 10 years. The software of the PDA system would be updated annually to deploy the most up-to-date questioning protocol developed by IAED.

### Dispatch of ambulances

7. Some members were concerned that the questioning by FSCC operators using the proposed computer system would unnecessarily delay the immediate dispatch of ambulances. The Administration explained that the procedures of taking calls and dispatching resources would be taken up by two individual FSCC operators as call-taker and dispatcher respectively. Once a call-taker confirmed the location of the incident, the nature of the call and the caller's contact information, the computer system would instantly transmit information and dispatch instructions to a dispatcher for immediate dispatch of ambulances. Meanwhile, the call-taker would maintain communication with the caller on the phone, raise a set of pre-structured questions according to the questioning protocol in the computer system to grasp the patient's conditions systematically, thereby giving detailed and appropriate PDA to the caller through immediate analysis by the computer system. The Administration assured members that there would be no delay in the process of dispatching an ambulance as the dispatching and questioning processes would be taken up separately by two operators.

8. On some members' enquiries regarding whether patients using EAS could request for transfer to a private hospital instead of a public hospital, the Administration explained that the present arrangement of transferring patients to the nearest public hospital aimed to ensure that patients could receive treatment within the shortest possible time.

9. The Administration will update the Panel on the implementation of PDA by FSD at the meeting on 15 February 2019.

### **Relevant papers**

10. A list of the relevant papers available on the Legislative Council website is in the **Appendix**.

**Relevant papers on  
Provision of post-dispatch advice in the Fire Services Department**

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>Paper</b>
Panel on Security	6.7.2009 (Item IV)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
	13.4.2010 (Item IV)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
	8.7.2014 (Item V)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
Finance Committee	8.5.2015	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>