

**LETTERHEAD OF HONG KONG FIRE SERVICES DEPARTMENT  
AMBULANCE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION**

Kowloon Central P.O. Box 70168

The Honorable James TO Kun-sun  
Chairman, Security Panel,  
Legislative Council,  
Legislative Council Building,  
8 Jackson Road,  
Hong Kong.

9 October 1998

Dear Sir,

We were advised by the Fire Services Department Management on 5.10.98 that after consulting the Executive Council, the Administration had decided that the Emergency Ambulance Service (EAS) would adopt a 12-minute response time for 92.5% of emergency calls as its new performance target to replace the current 10-minute travel time target with effect from 1 November, 1998.

We are extremely disappointed with the Administration's decision as we feel that our views, which have been clearly expressed to the Administration, have once again been neglected.

Although we fully support the adoption of response time, we have strong reservation on the 12-minute standard because:

1. it compares unfavourably with the 6-minute response time (for built up areas) of the fire counterparts in the same Department.
2. it compares unfavourably with the target and actual performance of many urban ambulance services throughout the world.

3. it is not a good and reasonable enough standard to the public having regard to the needs of the patients bearing in mind that the proposed response time is measured from the time of call up to the arrival of ambulance at the street level of the scene only, not up to the actual time of reaching the patient. It is surely not in the best interest of those injured and sick.
4. it will hinder the long-term development of the emergency ambulance service as the strategy for the development will be based on this unsatisfactory target.

On a number of occasions, the Administration emphasized that it had already been providing additional resources to the EAS in past years. However, we wish to point out that the additional resources were simply inadequate as between the period 1991-1996, there had been a complete stoppage of recruitment of ambulance staff due to the hiving off of non-emergency ambulance services. But during the same period, the increase in demand for emergency ambulance service was very significant. It is evident that the additional resources provided to EAS, together with the package of improvement measures as recommended by the 1995 Consultancy and implemented in the years 96/97, 97/98 and 98/99, have never been able to bring forth the expected improvement and meet the performance indicator. Despite all the shortfalls, it is nevertheless worth noting that the ambulance staff were still able to meet consistently over 89% of emergency calls within the 10-minute travel time target in the past years.

For the benefit of our community, we appeal for you, as well as your Panel Members' concern and support in this matter. In order to provide a more efficient and effective ambulance service, the Staff Side believes that the Administration should, in the short to medium term, aims at a 10-minute response time for EAS and, in the longer term, a 6-minute response time which is comparable to the fire counterparts of the same Department.

Should you require more details, please contact me at 2893 5592 (office) or 9437 1408 (mobile).

Thank you for your kind attention in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

(CHAN Kai-ming)  
Chairman, HKFSDAOA