

## **ITEM FOR ESTABLISHMENT SUBCOMMITTEE OF FINANCE COMMITTEE**

### **HEAD 45 - FIRE SERVICES DEPARTMENT Subhead 001 Salaries**

Members are invited to recommend to Finance  
Committee -

- (a) the creation of a new rank of -

Deputy Chief Ambulance Officer  
(GDS(C)1) (\$101,100 - \$107,500); and

- (b) the creation of the following permanent post -

1 Deputy Chief Ambulance Officer  
(GDS(C)1) (\$101,100 - \$107,500)

offset by the deletion of -

1 Senior Assistant Chief Ambulance Officer  
(GDS(O)36 - 38) (\$85,525 - \$92,700)

### **PROBLEM**

The Fire Services Department (FSD) does not have adequate staffing support at the directorate level to further develop its emergency ambulance service (EAS) into a modern and efficient service.

**/PROPOSAL .....**

## PROPOSAL

2. The Director of Fire Services (D of FS), with the support of the Secretary for Security, proposes to create a new rank of Deputy Chief Ambulance Officer (DCAO) (GDS(C)1) and to upgrade one post of Senior Assistant Chief Ambulance Officer (SACAO) (GDS(O)36-38) to this new rank to improve the management structure of the Ambulance Command and to provide an officer at the appropriate level to serve as a deputy to the Chief Ambulance Officer (CAO) (GDS(C)2). The new DCAO will take charge of the operational duties of EAS and assist the CAO in the further development of a paramedic ambulance service.

## JUSTIFICATION

### Present Organisation

3. As one of the seven Commands of the FSD, the Ambulance Command is responsible for the provision of EAS comprising pre-hospital care and conveyance of patients and casualties to hospitals. The CAO (GDS(C)2) heads the Command with a total establishment of 2 395 and is assisted by two SACAO (GDS(O)36-38). The SACAO(Operations) [SACAO(Op)] directly supervises the three operational regions of Hong Kong, Kowloon, and the New Territories; the SACAO(Administration) [SACAO(Adm)] manages the Training Division and the Administration Division. An organisation chart of the Ambulance Command is at Enclosure 1. The current job descriptions of the CAO, SACAO(Op) and SACAO(Adm) are at Enclosures 2 to 4.

Encl.1  
Encls.2-4

4. At present, the ambulance fleet comprises 2 265 uniformed staff, 238 ambulances and 26 ambulance aid motorcycles (AAMC) stationed at 29 ambulance depots/stations. The total number of calls handled in 1998 reached 464 248<sup>(1)</sup>. The SACAO(Op) is doing an increasingly demanding job in supervising the daily deployment of crews and vehicles, monitoring performance against pledged targets, handling staff matters and ensuring compliance with all operational procedures. Meanwhile, the CAO, being the only directorate officer in the Ambulance Command, is responsible for planning, co-ordinating and steering the implementation of improvement measures and new initiatives to meet the growing demand and public expectation for a higher standard of service.

**/Striving .....**

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<sup>(1)</sup> It comprised (a) 394 493 emergency calls involving immediate provision of ambulance aid and subsequent conveyance of the sick or injured persons to hospital; (b) 69 250 urgent calls involving the transfer of patients from a hospital or clinic to an acute hospital for urgent medical investigation or treatment; and (c) 505 non-emergency/removal calls handled on compassionate ground.

**Striving for a more efficient and cost-effective ambulance service**

5. Following the consultancy study on the ambulance service conducted in 1995, the CAO is fully committed to the implementation of the study recommendations with a view to improving the EAS performance. Most of the improvement measures recommended by the consultant have been implemented. These include streamlining operational procedures to enhance mobilisation of ambulances, extending the EAS cover by stationing ambulances at fire stations and securing resources to meet the growth in demand.

6. For the past 12 months, the EAS has been able to achieve its pledged performance target of responding to 92.5% of emergency calls within a 12-minute response time. Despite a growth of 7.5% in the number of emergency calls during the first quarter of 1999, 93.6% of EAS calls were delivered within the 12-minute response time target, compared with 88.3% for the corresponding period in 1998. To sustain the momentum, the CAO has to oversee personally the continued and full implementation of the long-term recommendations of the consultancy and deliver results in the following areas -

- (a) efficient deployment of ambulance resources through regular evaluation of the EAS demand and distribution, strategic deployment of ambulances and improvement of ambulance equipment; and
- (b) continued planning and development of emergency medical assistant (EMA) ambulances to answer high priority calls through regular review of the existing priority-based system.

Paragraphs 7 to 12 below detail the major tasks undertaken by the CAO.

**Development of Management Information System (MIS) for EAS**

7. The existing MIS in use is inadequate for capturing the required data for analysing the response time performance by geographical distribution, hours of the day and other parameters. The CAO has to devise the user requirements, oversee the implementation of a new tailor-made system to be incorporated in a new mobilising system of the Fire Services Communication Centre (FSCC) currently under planning, and keep it under review afterwards.

/Review .....

### **Review of utilisation of ambulance resources**

8. While the FSD has already hived off non-emergency ambulance service to other agents since 1997 to facilitate better utilisation of resources for EAS, the total number of calls handled by the Department has increased by 8.4%<sup>(2)</sup> over the past decade (or an increase of 66.8% taking emergency calls alone). The increase in demand outstripped the increase in ambulance resources. Indeed, in recent years, the demand for EAS has been growing at a steady rate of 7% per annum. The CAO has to spearhead regular review of the delivery of service and formulation and implementation of strategies to cope with the demand in a cost-effective way. In particular, he has to steer studies to examine ways to strengthen mobilisation capability by using new technology and scientific tools.

### **Development of paramedic ambulance service**

9. Paramedic ambulances were first introduced in 1992 following the worldwide trend to enhance the standard of pre-hospital care provided to the critically ill or seriously injured patients. Paramedic training covers four main areas including intravenous infusion, defibrillation, use of selected drugs and endotracheal intubation. At present, paramedic care performed by ambulance personnel is confined to the first three areas at a preliminary level. Out of a fleet of 195 operational ambulances, the number of EMA ambulances will double from 33 to 66 by 2000.

10. To meet public demand for paramedic service, the FSD is expanding the scope of paramedic ambulance service to the full Emergency Medical Assistant II (EMAI<sup>(3)</sup>) level by phases, including the introduction of endotracheal intubation, intramuscular injection and use of a wider range of drugs. The development of a full range of paramedic ambulance services is a long term objective. A number of complicated issues would need to be resolved in order to map out its future direction in Hong Kong. The CAO has to conduct a comprehensive study to determine the feasibility, resource requirements and implementation plans, including training and continual medical examination (CME) for the ambulance personnel.

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<sup>(2)</sup> In 1989, there were 236 568 emergency calls, 76 062 urgent calls and 115 571 non-emergency/removal calls. In 1998, there were 394 493 emergency calls (+66.8%), 69 250 urgent calls (-9.0%) and 505 non-emergency/removal calls (-99.6%).

<sup>(3)</sup> According to the classification of the Justice Institute of British Columbia Paramedic Academy, Canada, EMAII is a medical personnel with medical skills and knowledge to provide an advanced pre-hospital care at a pre-hospital setting.

11. Other aspects that require examination include the development of a quality assurance programme to monitor the performance of paramedic service; review of the job of a medical director employed to advise on training courses for EMAII and re-certification programmes (as part of the necessary accreditation requirements); and the legal implications for the use of drugs and other medication by EAS.

### **Public information, education and relations plan**

12. Noting concern over possible abuse of EAS in some quarters, the D of FS sees it important to intensify publicity efforts. The FSD is taking forward a new initiative, known as a Public Information, Education and Relations Plan, to disseminate service information, educate the public about the proper use of EAS and build up a customer relations strategy that would help manage public expectation arising from clinical and psychological needs. The CAO has to formulate an implementation plan, develop a network with outside bodies and monitor results.

### **Need for a DCAO Post**

13. In view of the substantial increase in workload and sophistication of issues requiring the personal attention of the CAO as explained above, the D of FS considers it increasingly difficult for the CAO to devote the necessary time and efforts to all areas of work without the assistance of a deputy at the directorate level. The two existing SACAOs underpinning the CAO are not pitched at the appropriate level to assist the CAO in handling policy issues and conducting independent studies and assessment for the development of EAS. The D of FS therefore proposes to create a new rank of DCAO and to upgrade the SACAO(Op) post to this rank as a deputy to the CAO. This would enhance the directorate strength in the management of the three operational regions to ensure operational efficiency and develop a full-fledged paramedic ambulance service.

14. While the CAO is responsible to the D of FS for gradually developing EAS into paramedic ambulance service in the long run, the proposed DCAO will identify the public demand for paramedic ambulance service, formulate training plans to qualify paramedics and supervising officers, establish measurable performance indicators, and develop quality re-certification and CME programmes. He will also examine the dispatch system of EMA ambulances and the protocol used by the FSCC to enable all EMA cases to be properly identified and attended to by EMA ambulances.

15. The proposed DCAO has to monitor closely and review continually the prevailing situation of the provision of EAS in the light of the distribution of the demand, its profile, and public expectation. He needs to collate and analyze operational data to map out strategic plans on the redeployment of resources taking into account constraints such as duty systems, location of ambulance depots and fire stations, hospital configuration and road network. The ultimate goal is to optimise operational efficiency, to ensure that the 12-minute response time performance target can be consistently met, and to further improve the performance target. The proposed DCAO will have to explore other means to achieve these aims, apart from strategic planning on deployment of ambulances. For instance, he will review the utilisation of AAMCs as the first response to emergency cases.

16. Through rationalisation of procedures and redistribution and delegation of duties, the work schedules of the CAO and the SACAO(Adm) will be re-organised upon the creation of the DCAO post. The CAO, as head of the Ambulance Command, will continue to assume overall responsibility for the provision of an efficient and effective EAS to the community, including strategic planning, formulation of a policy for paramedic ambulance service, appraising training needs of ambulance personnel, and steering the development and launch of new initiatives. The SACAO(Adm), to be re-designated as SACAO(HQ), will assist the CAO in administrative duties for the Ambulance Command Headquarters, human resources management, resources planning and supervision of the work of the Ambulance Command Training School.

17. The proposed job description of the DCAO post and revised job descriptions of the CAO and the SACAO(HQ) posts are at Enclosures 5, 6 and 7 respectively. The proposed organisation chart is at Enclosure 8.

Encl.5-7  
Encl.8

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

18. The additional notional annual salary cost of this proposal at MID-POINT is -

	\$	No. of Post
New permanent post	1,251,000	1
<i>Less</i> Permanent post deleted	1,069,320	1
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Additional cost	181,680	0
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19. The additional full annual average staff cost of the proposal, including salaries and staff on-cost, will be increased by \$110,808.

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20. In order to provide the necessary secretarial support to the proposed DCAO post, we will create one Personal Secretary II post at a notional annual mid-point salary cost of \$181,920 and a full annual average staff cost of \$309,816.

21. We have included sufficient provision in the 1999-2000 Estimates to meet the cost of this proposal.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

22. The rank of SACAO was established in 1989 with the creation of one post in the rank to relieve part of the workload of the CAO who was overburdened with increasing operational and administrative duties. The SACAO was designated as head of "Operations". The general administration and training work then continued to be shouldered by the Assistant Chief Ambulance Officer (Administration) [ACAO(Adm)] (GDS(O)32-35). The A CAO(Adm) post was subsequently upgraded to SACAO in 1997 due to increased responsibilities.

23. We consulted the LegCo Panel on Security on 16 October 1999. The Panel supported in principle the proposal to create the DCAO post to further improve EAS.

**CIVIL SERVICE BUREAU COMMENTS**

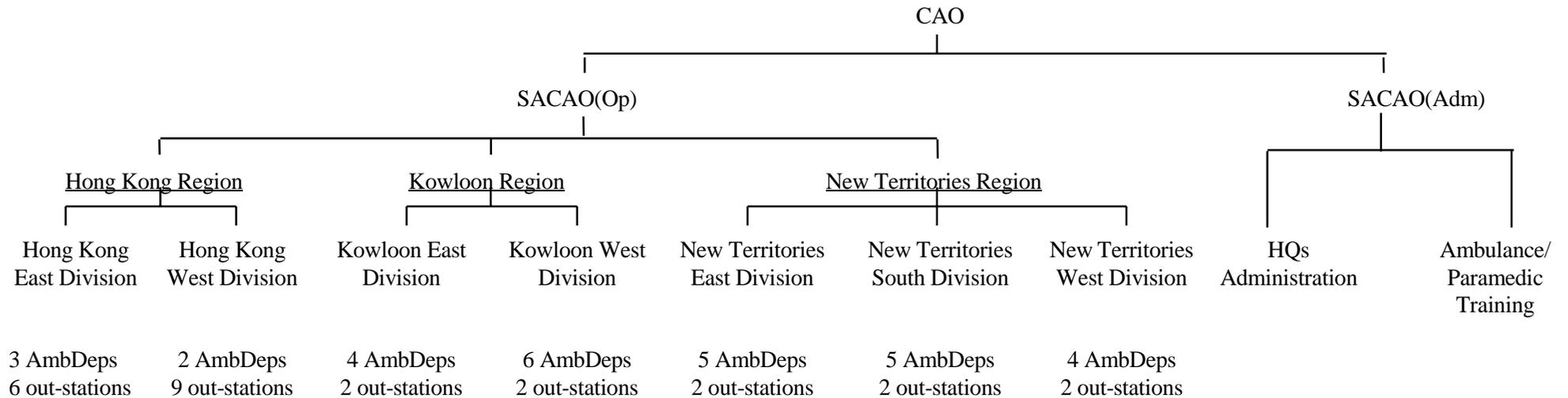
24. The Civil Service Bureau supports the creation of a new rank of DCAO and the upgrading of the SACAO(Op) post to DCAO level. It also agrees that the ranking and grading of the proposed post are appropriate.

**ADVICE OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON DISCIPLINED SERVICES SALARIES AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE**

25. The Standing Committee on Disciplined Services Salaries and Conditions of Service has advised that the grading proposed for the permanent post of Deputy Chief Ambulance Officer would be appropriate if the post were to be created.

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**Current Organisation Chart of Ambulance Command**



Legend

- CAO -Chief Ambulance Officer
- SACAO(Op) -Senior Assistant Chief Ambulance Officer (Operations)
- SACAO(Adm) -Senior Assistant Chief Ambulance Officer (Administration)
- HQs -Headquarters
- AmbDeps -Ambulance Depots

**Job Description of Chief Ambulance Officer**

1. Take charge of the management and control of the Ambulance Command and be responsible for the provision of an efficient and effective emergency ambulance service to the community.
2. Evaluate the performance of the Ambulance Service against the performance target.
3. Initiate, plan, implement and review measures to monitor and enhance the operational and administrative efficiency of the Ambulance Service.
4. Recommend to the Director development strategy, policies and vehicle/equipment provision to meet with the pledged standard of performance of the Ambulance Service.
5. Liaise with Policy Bureau and attend the Ambulance Service Steering Group on the determination and review of policies on the development of the Ambulance Service.
6. Manage the staff of Ambulance command in respect of their training, welfare, career development and discipline. Arrange postings for Officer ranks.
7. Attend meetings/liaise with the ambulance staff unions with a view to promoting mutual understanding with the Management and maintaining good staff morale.
8. Attend meetings with and draft replies to questions from the Legislature, other organisations and the media on the Ambulance Service.
9. Take personal command of ambulance operations at major disasters.
10. Perform continuous duties and other duties as assigned.

**Job Description of Senior Assistant Chief Ambulance Officer (Operations)**

1. Oversee the work and efficiency of the three operational regions of the Ambulance Command.
2. Control and review the deployment of the ambulance fleet and staff postings throughout the territory to maintain optimum efficiency in meeting public demands.
3. Ensure that the operational/standing orders are fully complied with by all units and review the operational policy and procedures from time to time, and carry out regular/surprise inspections to all units.
4. Take command of ambulance operations at major incidents.
5. Liaise with medical and other authorities about Ambulance Service, with a view to achieving cost-effective use of available resources.
6. Liaise with operational Fire Commands and other government departments on the provision of emergency ambulance service, e.g. in joint operations, exercises and special ambulance duties, etc.
7. Attend District Board meetings, liaise with District Officers, local Kaifong associations and other civic organisations.
8. Handle disciplinary cases, staff relation matters, investigate complaints and take follow-up actions as appropriate.
9. Deputise the Chief Ambulance Officer as required.
10. Perform continuous duty and other duties as assigned.

**Job Description of Senior Assistant Chief Ambulance Officer  
(Administration)**

1. Liaise with the FSD Headquarters Planning Group to plan and coordinate the requisition of resources to meet future needs and to improve the Ambulance Service, including the following -
  - (a) Monitor and evaluate the demand.
  - (b) Plan and implement capital projects.
  - (c) Undertake research on new ambulance aid techniques, methods and practices.
  - (d) Advise on the design, specification and evaluation of ambulance vehicle/equipment.
  - (e) Oversee the organisation of training programmes including the development of paramedical training.
  - (f) Formulate and implement staff management policies.
2. Oversee the implementation of service policies and orders, and conduct regular review with a view to revising and updating administrative procedures and Command Standing Orders for improving operational efficiency.
3. Implement Headquarters directives regarding training, welfare and staff relations generally.
4. Supervise the Ambulance Command Headquarters and the Fire Services Ambulance Command Training School.
5. Liaise with the Fire Services Headquarters, outside organisations and other government departments on matters relating to the improvement of the Ambulance Service.
6. Deputise the Chief Ambulance Officer as required.
7. Perform continuous duty and other duties as assigned.

**Proposed Job Description of the  
Deputy Chief Ambulance Officer**

1. Oversee the work and efficiency of the three operational regions of the Ambulance Command.
2. Plan, coordinate and control the deployment of ambulance resources throughout the territory to maintain the optimum efficiency of emergency ambulance service.
3. Monitor and improve performance of emergency ambulance service against target.
4. Ensure that the performance target is consistently achieved by conducting reviews, research and implementing quality assurance system.
5. Partake in the formulation and review of policies and operational procedures on ambulance services.
6. Plan and develop for implementation of a paramedic ambulance service.
7. Liaise with medical and other authorities about Ambulance Service, with a view to achieving cost-effective use of available resources.
8. Handle disciplinary cases, investigate complaints and take follow-up actions as appropriate.
9. Handle staff relations matters, attend meetings and liaise with ambulance staff unions.
10. Take personal command of ambulance operations at major incidents.
11. Deputise CAO as head of Ambulance Command during his absence.
12. Perform continuous duty and any other duties as assigned.

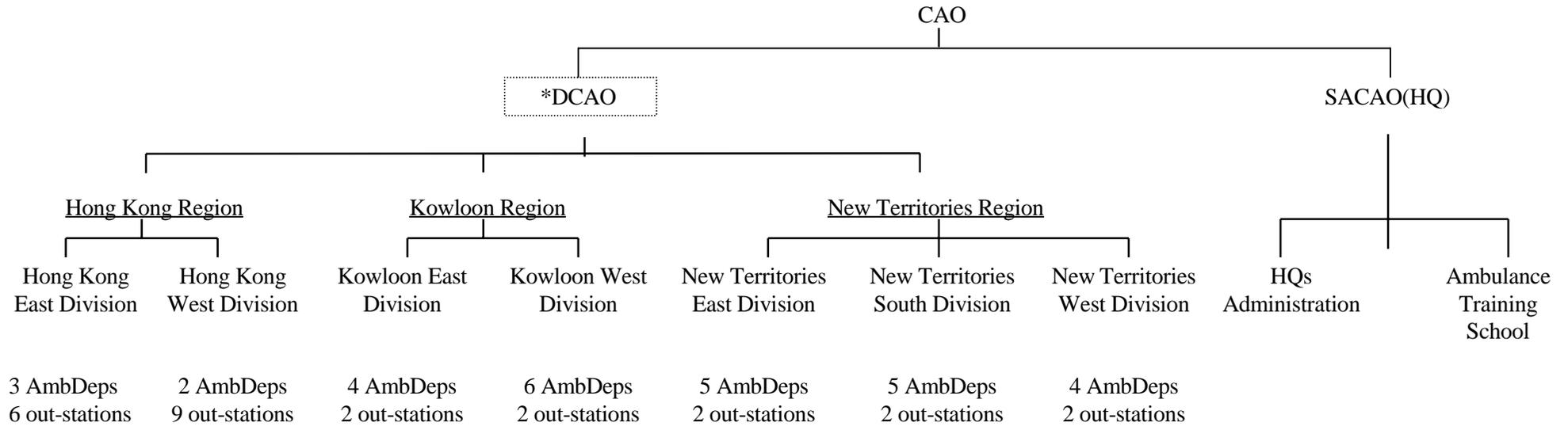
**Revised Job Description of Chief Ambulance Officer**

1. Take charge of the management and control of the Ambulance Command and be responsible for the provision of an efficient and effective emergency ambulance service to the community.
2. Evaluate the performance of the Ambulance Service against the performance target; direct the planning and implementation of new initiatives to improve the emergency ambulance service.
3. Steer the development of a paramedic ambulance service.
4. Recommend to the Director development strategy, policies and resources provision to meet the pledged standard of performance of the Ambulance Service.
5. Liaise with Policy Bureau and attend the Ambulance Service Steering Group on the determination and review of policies on the development of the Ambulance Service.
6. Manage the staff of Ambulance Command in respect of their training, welfare, career development and discipline.
7. Attend meetings/liaise with the ambulance staff unions with a view to promoting mutual understanding with the Management and maintaining good staff morale.
8. Attend meetings with and formulate replies to questions from the Legislature, other public organisation and the media on the Ambulance Service.
9. Take personal command of ambulance operations at major disasters.
10. Perform continuous duty and any other duties as assigned.

**Revised Job Description of the  
Senior Assistant Chief Ambulance Officer (Headquarters)**

1. Liaise with the FSD Headquarters Planning Group to plan and coordinate the requisition of resources to meet future needs and to improve the Ambulance Service, including the following -
  - (a) Monitor and evaluate the demand.
  - (b) Plan and implement capital projects.
  - (c) Undertake research on new pre-hospital care techniques, methods and practices.
  - (d) Advise on the design, specification and evaluation of ambulance vehicle/equipment.
  - (e) Oversee the organisation of training programmes including the development of paramedical training.
  - (f) Formulate and implement staff management policies.
2. Oversee the implementation of service policies and orders, and conduct regular reviews with a view to revising and updating administrative procedures and Command Standing Orders for improving operational efficiency.
3. Implement Headquarters directives regarding training and welfare generally.
4. Supervise the Ambulance Command Headquarters and the Fire Services Ambulance Command Training School.
5. Liaise with the Fire Services Headquarters, outside organisations and other government departments on matters relating to the improvement of the Ambulance Service.
6. Take personal command of ambulance operations at major incidents.
7. Perform continuous duty and any other duties as assigned.

**Proposed Organisation Chart of Ambulance Command**



\* (in a dotted box)

Proposed new post

Legend

- CAO -Chief Ambulance Officer
- DCAO -Deputy Chief Ambulance Officer
- SACAO(HQ) -Senior Assistant Chief Ambulance Officer (Headquarters)
- HQs -Headquarters
- AmbDeps -Ambulance Depots