

For Information
28 January 2000

LegCo Panel on Security

Review of Response Time and Performance Target for the Emergency Ambulance Service

INTRODUCTION

The Fire Services Department undertook to review the performance target for its Emergency Ambulance Service (EAS). This paper informs members of the findings.

BACKGROUND

2. Rather than basing its performance target on travel time, with effect from 1 November 1998, the Fire Services Department (FSD) adopted a 12-minute response time as the performance indicator for its EAS. The FSD also pledged to respond to 92.5% of emergency calls within the response time target.

3. At the meeting of the LegCo Panel on Security on 13 October 1998, the FSD undertook to review the 12-minute response time target and consider the feasibility of making further improvement on the pledged target. The actual performance of the EAS from November 1998 to October 1999 is set out at Annex for members' reference.

RESPONSE TIME PERFORMANCE TARGET

4. The 12-minute response time is the sum of two essential operational components i.e. a 10-minute travel time and a two-minute activation time. Travel time is the time required for an ambulance or ambulance-aid motorcycle to reach the street level of the scene of incident.

The setting of the travel time at 10 minutes is based on the recommendation of a consultancy study in 1996. Activation time measures the duration between the receipt of call and the time when the despatch procedures complete. In a trial scheme from September 1997 to March 1998, the FSD used the trunked radio system to measure the activation time and revealed that two minutes were required for the activation process. Hence, the EAS performance target of a 12-minute response time.

ACTUAL PERFORMANCE

5. For the 12-month period from November 1998 to October 1999, the FSD received a total of 413,663 emergency calls. This represents an increase of 5.6% in the EAS demand compared to the same period a year before i.e. from November 1997 to October 1998.

6. The month-by-month performance of the EAS from November 1998 to October 1999 is shown in Annex. It confirms a pattern of seasonal fluctuations in performance with the lowest performance indicator recorded in the third quarter of the year (i.e. July – September 1999). This is mainly due to inclement weather with undesirable traffic conditions normally associated with the rainy season.

7. Notwithstanding the above, on average, the EAS was able to respond to 93.35% of emergency calls within a 12-minute response time during the review period.^{Note} This is slightly above the pledged performance target of 92.5%.

8. The EAS performance in 1998/99 should be considered against a number of special factors. These include an addition of a total of 185 ambulance staff in late September 1998 and March 1999; strategic re-deployment and distribution of ambulances; and relatively dry weather and favourable traffic conditions in the first and fourth quarters of the year under review as compared to the normal pattern in previous years.

^{Note} The results also confirm that on average two minutes are required generally for the activation process.

OBSERVATIONS

9. The actual performance during the review period indicates that the 12-minute response time target is a reasonable and practical target for the EAS in Hong Kong. Although the statistics indicate slightly better performance above the pledged target, the margin is not significant enough for revamping the agreed performance target. After all, as explained in paragraph 8, the actual performance may be subject to fluctuations after 1998/99. The FSD does not propose alterations to the response time performance target at this stage.

IMPROVEMENT IN SERVICE QUALITY

10. The FSD is currently conducting two major studies. First, a Deputy Chief Ambulance Officer was appointed to undertake a comprehensive study on further development of paramedic ambulance service, including its possible incorporation into the basic training and duties of the ambulance personnel. Second, the FSD is undertaking a consultancy on the design of the Third Generation Mobilizing System of the Fire Services Communication Centre. It will study, inter alia, the feasibility to adopt more advanced and streamlined ambulance mobilizing procedures. The Department is hopeful that the studies would pave the way for improved service quality of the EAS and optimise ambulance resources to cope with projected growth in demand.

Security Bureau
January 2000

Annex

Response Time Performance (%)

November 1998 – October 1999

<i>Month/ Year</i>	<i>No. of Emergency Call</i>	<i>Response Time</i>						
		<i>Under 480 Sec. (8 min.)</i>	<i>Under 600 Sec. (10 min.)</i>	<i>Under 660 Sec. (11 min.)</i>	<i>Under 690 Sec. (11.5 min.)</i>	<i>Under 720 Sec. (12 min.)</i>	<i>Under 750 Sec. (12.5 min.)</i>	<i>Under 780 Sec. (13 min.)</i>
Nov. 98	31533	64.88%	84.97%	90.70%	92.56%	93.85%	94.97%	95.77%
Dec. 98	33630	65.32%	85.06%	90.60%	92.48%	93.98%	95.07%	95.94%
Jan. 99	38279	61.94%	83.00%	89.20%	91.27%	93.13%	94.35%	95.29%
Feb. 99	33051	62.69%	83.49%	89.53%	91.71%	93.50%	94.58%	95.52%
Mar. 99	33893	63.45%	84.28%	90.38%	92.53%	94.32%	95.32%	96.16%
Apr. 99	32615	64.08%	84.85%	90.82%	92.78%	94.26%	95.24%	96.09%
May 99	33545	64.49%	85.17%	90.81%	92.72%	94.09%	95.09%	95.98%
Jun. 99	34161	62.23%	83.59%	89.69%	91.82%	93.45%	94.52%	95.52%
Jul. 99	36578	60.46%	82.49%	88.74%	90.98%	92.76%	93.94%	94.89%
Aug. 99	35797	59.60%	81.50%	87.90%	90.15%	91.89%	93.31%	94.45%
Sep. 99	35467	59.65%	80.97%	87.19%	89.30%	91.21%	92.42%	93.61%
Oct. 99	35114	63.44%	84.45%	90.23%	92.27%	94.03%	95.03%	95.89%
Average Performance from Nov.98 to Oct.99		62.62%	83.61%	89.61%	91.68%	93.35%	94.47%	95.41%