

政府總部
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GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT
LOWER ALBERT ROAD
HONG KONG

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Clerk to Security Panel
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road
Central
Hong Kong
(Attn: Mr Raymond LAM)

Dear Mr Lam,

**Visit to the Fire Services Communication Centre (FSCC)
by the Security Panel of the Legislative Council**

I write to express our gratitude to Members of the Security Panel of the Legislative Council for their visit to the Fire Services Communication Centre (FSCC) on 18 January 2010 which aimed to allow Members to understand the actual operation of the existing ambulance dispatch as well as that under the proposed Medical Priority Dispatch System (MPDS). In response to Members' request, I set out the supplementary information below-

Benefits of the MPDS

At present, the MPDS has been adopted in over 30 countries, handling more than 50 million emergency calls each year. According to the information provided by the International Academies of Emergency Dispatch (IAED), as the population varies from country to country, the average call number under each category may differ. Generally speaking, the average number of critical cases (i.e. Response 1 calls) represents about 35% - 40% of all cases, while that of serious but non-life-threatening cases (i.e. Response 2 calls) accounts for about 15% - 20% of the total number of calls and the rest are non-acute cases (i.e. Response 3 calls).

According to the statistics provided by the IAED, if the MPDS is implemented in Hong Kong, our projected proportion will be similar to the above average figures. Taking the 617,000 emergency ambulance calls received in Hong Kong in 2009 as an example, around 200,000 cases could be benefited from a shorter target response time. Since the Administration proposes to set the target response time of nine-minute for Response 1 calls, which is three minutes shorter than the current standardised target response time of 12 minutes, it will bring about substantial benefits to patients in critical condition. The survival rate of patients with heart disease, in particular, will be increased by about 10% for every one-minute improvement in the giving of treatment at the scene. With respect to Response 3 calls, they are all non-acute calls. In countries where the MPDS is implemented, they generally set a longer target response time for these calls. For instance, Toronto sets a target of 21 minutes for these cases, and some places like Queensland and London even do not set any target response time for these cases.

Possible post-dispatch changes in patients' conditions

According to a Matching Study to cross-check the categorisations of calls under the MPDS with the clinical conditions of patients after their arrival at hospitals, the IAED found that mismatches were only found in one to two percent of all the cases. However, these cases did not necessarily mean that the information provided by callers was inaccurate, as patients' conditions might have changed before they arrived at hospitals. For example, patients' conditions might get better because of the treatment by paramedics or might get worse because of some other reasons. Besides, there is no international study concerning dispatch being affected by "inaccurate information provided by callers unintentionally".

Resources required for giving post-dispatch advice only

If the Fire Services Department gives useful and elaborate post-dispatch advice according to the specific condition of the patients without prioritising calls for ambulance dispatch, it still needs to procure questioning protocol software and, where necessary, bid resources according to existing mechanism in order to deploy sufficient personnel to manage ambulance calls, provide post-dispatch advice and dispatch ambulances according to the questioning protocol.

Amplifying device or handsfree kit for telephone

The proposed MPDS has been implemented in over 30 countries for many years. As in overseas countries, many residential phones and mobile phones in Hong Kong already come with amplifying device or handsfree kit. If a caller's phone is not equipped as such and there is no one around for assistance, the operator of the FSCC will still stay on line with the caller and offer proper assistance in the light of his/her actual circumstances. For example, the caller may be asked, where appropriate, to put down the handset and follow the post-dispatch advice given, during which he/she may pick up the handset and talk to the operator at anytime.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cherie Yeung', written in a cursive style.

(Ms Cherie Yeung)
for Secretary for Security