

For information
on 25 November 2011

**Legislative Council Panel on Security
Dissemination of Case Information by Disciplined Forces**

Introduction

This paper provides information on the arrangements for the disciplined forces to disseminate information of unforeseen incidents.

Principles of Dissemination of Information of Unforeseen Incidents by Disciplined Forces

2. All disciplined forces under the Security Bureau fully respect media's freedom of reporting, especially if a case involves public interest, public safety or is a major incident. They are aware of the fact that public interest may override privacy of individuals in certain unforeseen or emergency incidents, and the disciplined forces concerned will disseminate information of these unforeseen incidents in good time to facilitate media's reporting by making reference to the principles set out in paragraph 3 below as well as making proper arrangements to protect privacy of individuals as far as practicable. In fact, the Hong Kong Police Force (the Police) adopted enhanced measures in October this year to improve the mechanism of disseminating information of unforeseen incidents. The Police will continue to liaise with media agencies and journalists' associations in this respect. The Fire Services Department will also continue to liaise with media agencies and journalists' associations in the process of introducing the Digital Trunked Radio System, with a view to enhancing the arrangements for disseminating information of emergency incidents.

3. Upon receipt of requests for assistance from the public via the 999 emergency telephone channel in case of unforeseen or emergency incidents, the foremost task of the concerned disciplined forces, including the Police and the Fire Services Department, is to obtain basic personal information and a brief account of the incident from the caller to provide

emergency assistance, rescue services or to conduct investigation into the case, so as to fulfill their statutory duties under the relevant ordinances. Personal information and details of request provided by the person dialing the 999 hotline are merely for the disciplined forces to provide necessary assistance to the individuals concerned as soon as possible. Since the information disclosed to the disciplined forces involves privacy of individuals and third party information, the disciplined forces, in handling and dissemination of case information, should strictly follow the requirements under the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance and ensure that all the important principles governing disclosure of third party information under the Code on Access to Information have been complied with. Furthermore, any information disseminated should not affect covert operation, rescue or investigation of the disciplined forces during response to emergencies, and should not affect any possible judicial procedures in relation to the incidents.

Arrangements for the Dissemination of Information

4. We understand the concern of the media sector over the mechanism of disseminating information of unforeseen incidents by disciplined forces. The arrangements for the dissemination of information by the Police, the Fire Services Department and other disciplined forces are set out in Annex A, Annex B and Annex C respectively for Members' reference. The disciplined forces will maintain communication with media agencies and journalists' associations on an on-going basis to continue enhancing the arrangements.

Security Bureau
Hong Kong Police Force
Fire Services Department
Immigration Department
Customs and Excise Department
Correctional Services Department
Government Flying Service

November 2011

Arrangements on releasing unforeseen incident information by the Police

As far as the mechanism of disseminating information of unforeseen incidents by the Police is concerned, when an emergency call is received by the 999 Command and Control Centre, the Police will immediately deploy officers to the scene to assess the situation, provide assistance, or conduct investigation. After the nature of the incident reported has been ascertained, except for those cases with sensitive nature (please refer to the third paragraph below), the Divisional Controller of the 999 Command and Control Centre will inform the Duty Supervisor for his consideration to disseminate case information to the media. The Duty Supervisor will conduct assessment based on the principles set out in the second and third paragraph of this Information Paper, and pass the relevant information to Police Public Relations Branch (PPRB) for dissemination. PPRB will then issue the information in the form of “Attention News Editors” through the Government News and Media Information System of the Information Services Department, so that the media could decide whether to cover the incident at scene. If the nature of the incident is trivial, it will not be released via the system.

2. Information disseminated to the media includes the nature of the incident, street name and street number indicating the location where the incident occurred and the time when the police received the report.

3. For incidents with sensitive nature such as blackmail, criminal intimidation, sexual offences and unlawful detention, the Divisional Controller will immediately inform the Duty Controller in accordance with the established procedures, once the reported incident has been ascertained. According to the principles listed in the second and third paragraph of this Information Paper, the Duty Controller will conduct assessment, and if necessary consult the Officer-in-Charge of the case, whether it is appropriate to disseminate the incident information immediately. In the event that the incident is considered to be not appropriate for immediate release, the Officer-in-Charge of the case will decide on the time and avenues for dissemination, taking into account the nature of the concerned case, which may vary from case to case.

Avenues for information dissemination include press release, press briefing, press conference, etc.

Review

4. The Police always respect the media's freedom of reporting. Public support is essential to enable the Police to carry out their duties effectively and it is of paramount importance to maintain the confidence of the public in the Force and to project a good image. With a view to improving the mechanism of disseminating information of unforeseen incidents, enhancement has been made since mid October this year. We have provided a list of examples of unforeseen incidents that may involve public interest for the reference of the concerned officers when deciding whether to disseminate the incident information. PPRB has also held meetings with concerned Formation Commanders to explain in details the purpose of the enhanced mechanism and the arrangements involved so that officers concerned, in executing their duties, can also facilitate the information dissemination arrangements. A reference list of unforeseen incidents for dissemination of information is at Enclosure.

5. We will continue to review the mechanism of disseminating information of unforeseen incidents. We will also explore the use of information technology to further streamline the disseminating procedures, including disseminating incident information direct from the system at the 999 Command and Control Centre to the media organizations. The Police will continue to maintain dialogue with media organizations and journalists' associations. We will also listen to the views of all sectors and review the mechanism continuously to identify room for improvement so as to enhance the efficiency of information dissemination.

**Hong Kong Police Force
November 2011**

A reference list of unforeseen incidents for dissemination of information

Below is a list of example of unforeseen incidents which serves as a reference for the concerned officers in deciding whether to disseminate incident information.

Incidents marked with * are those with sensitive nature and thus their information dissemination arrangements will be differed from others.

Incident

- ◆ Abandoned Child
- ◆ Animal Carcass Found
- ◆ Animal Found
- ◆ AOABH (Assault Occasioning Actual Bodily Harm)
- ◆ Arson
- ◆ Assault
- ◆ Assaulting Police Officer
- ◆ Blackmail*
- ◆ Bomb Found
- ◆ Bomb Threat
- ◆ Burglary
- ◆ Car Found Damaged
- ◆ Criminal Damage
- ◆ Criminal Intimidation*
- ◆ Dangerous Scaffolding
- ◆ Dangerous Signboard

- ◆ Dead Body Found
- ◆ Deception
- ◆ Dispute
- ◆ Dog Bite
- ◆ Drunk Person
- ◆ Fighting
- ◆ Fighting in a Public Place
- ◆ Fire
- ◆ Gas Leakage
- ◆ Impersonating a Police Officer
- ◆ Indecent Exposure
- ◆ Industrial Accident
- ◆ Injured Person Found
- ◆ Insane Person Found
- ◆ Landslide
- ◆ Murder
- ◆ Obstructing a Public Officer Executing Duty
- ◆ Odd Smell Found
- ◆ OFFH (Object Fell from Height)
- ◆ Open Fire
- ◆ Person Collapsed
- ◆ Person Accidentally Injured
- ◆ Person Drowning

- ◆ Person Fallen into Sea
- ◆ Person Found Hanging
- ◆ Person Fell from Height
- ◆ Person in Dangerous Position
- ◆ Pickpocketing
- ◆ Police Open Fire
- ◆ Police injured on Duty
- ◆ Possession of Dangerous Drugs
- ◆ Robbery
- ◆ Robbery Involving Pistol-Like Object
- ◆ Robbery-Attempted
- ◆ RPA (Request for Police Assistance)
- ◆ RPI (Request for Police Investigation)
- ◆ Serious Assault
- ◆ Sexual Offence*
- ◆ Shop Theft
- ◆ Smoke Found
- ◆ Smuggling
- ◆ Snake Found
- ◆ Snatching
- ◆ Suicide
- ◆ Suicide-Attempted
- ◆ Suspicious Object Found

- ◆ Suspicious Person Found
- ◆ Suspicious Vehicle Found
- ◆ TADO (Traffic Accident with Damage Only)
- ◆ TAPI (Traffic Accident with Person Injured)
- ◆ TCWA (Taking Conveyance Without Authority)
- ◆ Theft
- ◆ Theft from Construction Site
- ◆ Theft from Vehicle
- ◆ Tree Collapsed
- ◆ Unlawful Detention*
- ◆ Uttering Forged Banknotes
- ◆ Vehicle on Fire
- ◆ Vessel Collision
- ◆ Wounding

Hong Kong Police Force
November 2011

Arrangements on releasing unforeseen incident information by the Fire Services Department

When unforeseen incidents happen, the top priority of the Fire Services Department (FSD) officers is to carry out fire-fighting or rescue operations. In this connection, FSD needs to ensure that the dissemination of incident information would not affect their emergency rescue services nor compromise the mobilizing efficiency of the Fire Services Communications Centre in the dispatch of fire appliances and ambulances.

2. Currently, media enquiries on unforeseen incidents received by FSD are responded either by the Incident Commander at the scene or by concerned officers. The Department also issues press releases on major incidents (e.g. serious fire incidents).

Improving Information Dissemination Mechanism of Unforeseen Incidents

3. To achieve and maintain effective and efficient radio communication at scenes of incident, FSD has introduced the Digital Trunked Radio System (the “new system”) in July this year. As the new system is still under testing, it is currently in parallel operation with the existing Analogue Trunked Radio System (the “old system”). The testing is expected to be completed in January 2012 and the new system would then commence full operation independently. As the functions of the old system are deteriorating, and some of the parts are no longer produced by the manufacturer, FSD has been unable to repair and maintain the old system effectively. Therefore, the old system would be decommissioned in January 2012 as well.

4. To improve the information dissemination mechanism of unforeseen incidents, FSD has been liaising with media agencies and journalists’ associations and communicating with its staff since July to gauge their comments on the arrangements for disseminating information of unforeseen incidents, with a view to drawing up appropriate guidelines for concerned staff and perfecting the mechanism.

Procedures and Information for Dissemination

5. FSD would arrange for the release of incident information as soon as practicable from January 2012, drawing reference from the principles set out in paragraphs 2 and 3 of this Information Paper. It will

release information¹ on cases of fire, special services (e.g. gas leakage, building collapse, persons being trapped inside lift, etc., with details at Appendix) and those involving multiple casualties or patients. The following incident information will be released to the media:

- (i) Date and time of incident;
- (ii) Street number and name of incident address; and
- (iii) Nature of incident.

6. For individual calls for emergency ambulance service (EAS), information provided by the callers is solely for FSD to provide the EAS. Moreover, close to 2 000 calls seeking EAS are received on average every day. Therefore, in general, FSD would not release information on individual calls for EAS. But for EAS cases involving special conditions like major incidents, multiple casualties or infectious diseases, FSD would make special arrangements for information dissemination.

7. FSD will continue to maintain dialogue and exchange views with media agencies and journalists' associations on the information dissemination mechanism of unforeseen incidents.

**Fire Services Department
November 2011**

¹ FSD will release the incident information through the Government News and Media Information System of the Information Services Department.

Major Special Services provided by FSD

Rescue from drowning

Animal rescue

Suspected jump from height

Stranded at height

Trapped inside lift

Trapped inside house

Flooding incident

Aircraft incident at airport

Vessel incident

Marine pollution incident

Explosive threat

Chemical spillage incident

Biological incident

Radioactive incident

Fuel leakage

Electrocution

Building collapse

Landslide

Helicopter crash

Mountain rescue

Train crash incident

Toxic gas incident

Assisting in the removal of tree posing danger

**Arrangements on releasing information of major incidents by
the Immigration Department, the Customs and Excise Department,
the Correctional Services Department and
the Government Flying Services**

The Immigration Department, the Customs and Excise Department, the Correctional Services Department and the Government Flying Services would not directly handle emergency requests for assistance from the 999 emergency hotline in usual cases. Nevertheless, the concerned Departments would facilitate media's reporting and provide assistance when they disseminate information of major incidents, by following the principles set out in paragraphs two and three of this Information Paper. The arrangements of the Immigration Department, the Customs and Excise Department, the Correctional Services Department and the Government Flying Services on releasing information of major incidents are set out in the following paragraphs:

Immigration Department

2. The Communications and Public Affairs Section of the Immigration Department is responsible for matters related to the dissemination of information. It maintains close liaison with the media to assist them in obtaining the required information. It also facilitates media reporting and disseminating information to the public by appropriate means, including arranging press conferences, issuing press releases and answering enquires etc. The Immigration Department will continue to maintain effective communication with media agencies and improve the efficiency of information dissemination.

Customs and Excise Department

3. The Customs and Excise Department will disseminate information to the media as soon as possible through issuing press releases and arranging press conferences and on-site briefings. The Customs and Excise Department will prepare press releases which include information of the case concerned or photographs of seized items as far as possible and disseminate the information to the media through the Government News Information System of the Information Services Department (ISD).

Correctional Services Department

4. When major incidents happen in correctional facilities, such as unnatural death of prisoners, attempted escape of prisoners, major fire, attempted suicide of prisoners and serious damage of prison facilities etc., the Correctional Services Department will disseminate relevant information to the media as soon as practicable through press release, different forms of press conference, press briefing or the Government News and Media Information System of ISD.

Government Flying Service

5. When the Air Command and Control Centre of the Government Flying Service receives requests for providing emergency air support from Government Departments, it will immediately deploy aircraft and officers to the scene to ascertain the scale of the incident and offer assistance. Information on major incidents will be disseminated by the Government Flying Service to the media through the Government News Information System of ISD.

**Immigration Department
Customs and Excise Department
Correctional Services Department
Government Flying Service**

November 2011