

**Arrangements on releasing unforeseen incident information by the Police**

The Hong Kong Police Force attaches great importance to the public's right to know, public safety and public interest in unforeseen or emergency incidents. The Force also highly respects the media's freedom of reporting, especially if a case involves public interest, public safety or is a major incident.

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 Police 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 incident, so as to fulfil our statutory duties under the relevant ordinances. Personal information and details of request provided by the person dialling the 999 hotline are merely for the Police to provide the necessary assistance to the individuals concerned as soon as possible. In dissemination of information on such incidents, we 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 during response to emergencies, and should not affect any possible judicial procedures in relation to the incidents.

Based on the principles set out above, upon receipt of requests for assistance in case of unforeseen or emergency incidents, the Regional Command & Control Centre (RCCC) Supervisor will conduct assessment of the case 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 case is trivial, it will not be released via the system.

Information on unforeseen incidents disseminated to the media is as follows:

- (i) Nature of the incident;
- (ii) Name and number of the street indicating the location where the incident occurred;
- (iii) Time when police received the report;
- (iv) Number of persons injured;
- (v) Number of persons arrested;

- (vi) Number of deaths;
- (vii) Number of vehicles involved; and
- (viii) Use of weapon, if any.

For incidents of very sensitive nature, such as blackmail, criminal intimidation, sexual offences and unlawful detention, the RCCC Supervisor will inform the RCCC Duty Controller according to the established procedures once the reported incident has been ascertained. The RCCC Duty Controller will conduct assessment based on the above-mentioned principles and if necessary consult the Officer-in-Charge of the case whether it is appropriate to disseminate the incident information. 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 the 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.

The Hong Kong Police Force has close liaison with journalists' associations and media organisations. Views have been exchanged on issues of concern to both sides, so as to strengthen mutual understanding and facilitate the work in future with better cooperation. Hence, in the past two years, the Force conducted 23 meetings or visits with journalists' associations and frontline reporters. Views were exchanged on the information dissemination mechanism, the use of technology to enhance the efficiency of information dissemination, etc. The average daily number of incidents tagged to the media has increased significantly from 13 in October 2011 to 412 in 2013. The Force will continue its communication with media organisations and journalists' associations, listen to the views of different sectors and review the mechanism continuously to identify room for improvement so as to enhance the efficiency of information dissemination.

Hong Kong Police Force  
January 2014