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Panel on Security

Information note prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat for the meeting on 1 December 2015

Marine fire-fighting and rescue strategies of the Fire Services Department

The subject of marine fire-fighting and rescue strategies of the Fire Services Department ("FSD") per se has not been discussed by the Panel on Security ("the Panel"). However, several fire incidents involving fishing vessels occurred at typhoon shelters in recent years have aroused Members' concern about the fire-fighting measures put in place by FSD. In its response to a joint letter dated 29 September 2015 from two Members regarding a vessel fire which broke out at Shau Kei Wan Typhoon Shelter on 27 September 2015, the Administration has provided information on marine fire-fighting measures and operational strategies adopted by FSD. Members may wish to refer to LC Paper No. CB(2)29/15-16(01) for the Administration's response. In addition, Members have raised questions relating to the subject at the Council meetings of 20 February 2013, 24 June 2015 and 28 October 2015. The questions raised by Members and the Administration's replies are in **Appendices I to III** respectively.

2. The Administration will brief the Panel on FSD's marine fire-fighting and rescue strategies at the meeting on 1 December 2015.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
25 November 2015

Appendix I

Press Releases

LCQ8: Marine fire-fighting and rescue strategies and equipment in Hong Kong

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Following is a written reply by the Secretary for Security, Mr Lai Tung-kwok, to a question by the Hon Steven Ho Chun-yin in the Legislative Council today (February 20):

Question:

In the morning of January 19 this year, several fishing vessels caught fire one after another at the typhoon shelter opposite Sam Shing Estate in Tuen Mun (the blaze). Not until eight hours later was the blaze put out. A total of four "hang trawlers" were ravaged and one of them even capsised and sank. Moreover, a number of vessel fires have occurred within the waters of Hong Kong in recent years, and in a vessel fire in Castle Peak Bay last June, the vessel owner even died in the raging flame. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) of the general response time for the eight fireboats and speed boats currently in Hong Kong to arrive at various typhoon shelters, sea bays and water areas from their respective berths (set out in the table of Question Annex, and put a mark "/" for areas beyond their service area);

(b) given that in the blaze it took as long as about 20 and 40 minutes respectively for the first speed boat and fireboat to arrive at the fire scene after the call, whether it has assessed if this situation was one of the reasons for the ravaging or sinking of the vessels; if the assessment outcome is in the affirmative, whether it will conduct any review and what are the details of such review; if it has not, of the reasons for that;

(c) given that some fishermen have relayed that in the blaze the water pressure of the fire hoses on the speed boats was even weaker than that from the hoses of water supply vessels, rendering it difficult to put out the fires expeditiously, and electronic system failure has happened in some fireboats in the past, whether the Fire Services Department (FSD) will conduct a comprehensive review on the equipment of the fireboats and speed boats; if it will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(d) given the increased fire hazards during the fishing moratorium in the South China Sea and some festivities (e.g. the Lunar New Year, Tin Hau Festival as well as the Spring and Autumn Ancestral Offerings Ceremonies) when a large number of fishing vessels return to berth at the typhoon shelters, whether FSD will put in place fire-fighting measures which are more effective (e.g. deploying fireboats to station at various typhoon shelters and sea bays round-the-clock) or other measures before the next peak season when fishing vessels return to berth, with a view to preventing the spread of vessel fires at typhoon shelters; if it will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(e) given that some fishermen have relayed that fireboats are not stationed at typhoon shelters at present, save for the Aberdeen and Cheung Chau typhoon shelters, and Fireboat 5 berthed at Tuen Mun River Trade Terminal even has to service the water areas of the entire New Territory West, rendering some sea bays and typhoon shelters beyond the reach of fireboats, thus jeopardising the safety of the vessels, whether the authorities will purchase more fireboats of newer models and set up a "fireboat fire station" at each sea bay and typhoon shelter and deploy at least one fireboat to station at each sea bay and typhoon shelter; if

they will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the five parts of the question is as follows:

(a) The time it generally takes for various fireboats and fire speedboats of the Fire Services Department (FSD) to arrive at the typhoon shelters or sea bays within their main service areas from their respective fireboat stations or berths is set out at the table of the Reply Annex.

(b) At 10.50am on January 19 this year, the Fire Services Communication Centre received a fire call reporting that there was a fishing vessel fire at the Tuen Mun Typhoon Shelter. FSD immediately despatched two fire speedboats and three fireboats, which were nearest to the incident scene, for fire-fighting and rescue operation.

The first speedboat arrived at the scene at 11.09am (i.e. 19 minutes (Note 1) after the receipt of the call). It activated the water monitor on the board for fire-fighting and commenced rescue and search operation. In the meantime, a marine police launch and a customs launch equipped with fire-fighting equipment also discharged water to assist in extinguishing the fire. At that time, Fireboat No.5, which stations at Tuen Mun, was carrying out fire service duties in other parts of its service area. After receiving the fire call, it immediately headed towards the scene and arrived 40 minutes afterwards.

FSD pointed out that according to the fire call, the fire at the concerned fishing vessel was already vigorous at that time and was spreading to the adjacent fishing vessels because of the wind. As the hull and deck of the fishing vessels were made up of a large amount of fiberglass materials and there were several explosions involving liquefied petroleum gas cylinders on the vessels, the spreading of the fire was intensified and caused severe damage to four fishing vessels. One of the fishing vessels had already leant to right at the early stage of the fire and the fire had caused damage to its hull, leading to severe water ingress into the hull and the sinking of the vessel.

(c) FSD conducts overall review on its marine fire-fighting and rescue strategies in Hong Kong as well as the related equipment from time to time. The present fire-fighting and rescue equipment of FSD for handling marine incidents are of similar standards to those used by other advanced regions. The fire speedboat that first arrived at the scene in the incident was equipped with one water monitor and fire-fighting hoses and other equipment. Its fire pump can discharge water at a maximum rate of 450 litres per minute and with a reach of 26 metres. Fire speedboats have higher speed and offer greater flexibility for operation, thereby enabling speedier arrival of firemen at the scene for fire-fighting and rescue operation.

The Marine Department (MD) is responsible for the maintenance and repair of all FSD's vessels. It also prepares regular maintenance schedule for each of the vessels to ensure that the equipment on them is kept in good condition.

(d) A larger number of vessels will return to berth at the typhoon shelters during fish moratorium and festive periods. In the light of this, FSD will deploy vessels to major typhoon shelters during morning, noon and evening sessions daily to conduct inspection and broadcast fire safety messages to remind fishermen of fire safety. In view of the increased fire risks in the Tuen Mun Typhoon Shelter during fish moratorium and the Lunar New Year holidays, FSD will also particularly deploy fire

speedboat and firemen on standby and conduct inspection at the Shelter, with a view to strengthening its fire safety during those periods.

Moreover, FSD and related departments will organise thematic talks on fire prevention to remind fishermen about the use and maintenance of electrical installations on vessels and teach them the correct way to use a fire extinguisher, etc. This will help to strengthen their fire safety awareness and prevent fire. On the other hand, FSD will also conduct fire drills at sea in collaboration with the Police and MD so as to enhance the efficiency of fire-fighting and rescue operation.

FSD will continue to monitor the number of fishing vessels berthed at individual typhoon shelters during fish moratorium and the periods leading up to and after various festivals, and will consider deploying fire speedboats and firemen on standby and to conduct inspection at the shelters so as to provide more efficient fire-fighting and rescue services in case of a fire.

(e) At present, FSD takes into consideration the overall risk assessment of different regions, including the distribution of vessels, utilisation of shipping channels, existence of high risk facilities on the sea and along the coastline, etc., in deciding the location of fireboat stations and the stationing of fireboats. On whether a fireboat would be deployed at a particular typhoon shelter, it depends on whether the concerned shelter is at a strategic location within that water area, and whether it may provide a suitable berth for the fireboat, e.g. whether the water depth of the shelter is sufficient, etc. FSD has deployed fireboats at the Aberdeen and Cheung Chau Typhoon Shelters as they facilitate the provision of fire-fighting and rescue services to the southern waters of Hong Kong Island and Lamma Island as well as the southern waters of Cheung Chau and Lautau Island respectively, and the water depth of the two shelters is sufficient.

In addition, FSD is proceeding with the replacement of Fireboat No.7. The new Fireboat No.7 is expected to be in operation in end 2014 and is planned to be deployed to the Tuen Mun Fireboat Station to strengthen the marine fire-fighting and rescue services for the northwestern waters including Tuen Mun.

FSD will closely monitor various developments in Hong Kong waters and assess the fire risk from time to time. It will also review the deployment of fire service resources and operation strategies regularly and make appropriate arrangement in light of the needs of individual areas or periods, including the deployment of fire speedboats and firemen on standby at the shelters in specific periods. FSD will also continue to strengthen its fire safety publicity and education efforts at the shelters to enhance fire safety awareness of fishermen for fire prevention purpose.

Note 1: The concerned fire speedboat took a longer time to arrive at the Tuen Mun Typhoon Shelter than what is normally required as there were more vessels on the sea than usual.

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LCQ 8
Question Annex

The time generally required for FSD's fireboats and fire speedboats to arrive at the typhoon shelters/sea bays within their main service areas (in minutes)

Typhoon shelter／sea bay	Fireboat								Speed boat
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Aberdeen West Typhoon Shelter									
Aberdeen South Typhoon Shelter									
Causeway Bay Typhoon Shelter									
Cheung Chau Typhoon Shelter									
Kwun Tong Typhoon Shelter									
New Yau Ma Tei Typhoon Shelter									
Sam Ka Tsuen Typhoon Shelter									
Shaukeiwan Typhoon Shelter									
To Kwa Wan Typhoon Shelter									
Tuen Mun Typhoon Shelter									
Yim Tin Tsai Typhoon Shelter									
Tai O									
River Trade Terminal (Tuen Mun)									
Sea bay near godown in Chai Wan									
Tuen Mun Cafeteria Beach									

LCQ 8
Reply Annex

The time generally required for FSD's fireboats and fire speedboats to arrive at the typhoon shelters/sea bays within their main service areas (Note 1) (in minutes)

Typhoon shelter／sea bay	Fireboat (Note 2)								Fire Speedboat
	No. 1	No. 2	No. 3	No. 4	No. 5	No. 6	No. 7	No. 8	
Aberdeen West Typhoon Shelter	/	/	/	1.5	/	/	/	/	19
Aberdeen South Typhoon Shelter	/	/	/	6	/	/	/	/	25
Causeway Bay Typhoon Shelter	10	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	12
Cheung Chau Typhoon Shelter	/	/	3	/	/	/	/	/	29
Kwun Tong Typhoon Shelter	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	7	17
New Yau Ma Tei Typhoon Shelter	20	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	3.5
Sam Ka Tsuen Typhoon Shelter	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	7	16
Shaukeiwan Typhoon Shelter	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	8	16
To Kwa Wan Typhoon Shelter	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	8	12
Tuen Mun Typhoon Shelter	/	/	/	/	15	/	/	/	13
Yim Tin Tsai Typhoon Shelter	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	45	20
Tai O Sheltered Anchorage	/	/	/	/	46	/	/	/	5
River Trade Terminal (Tuen Mun)	/	/	/	/	10	/	/	/	8
Sea bay near godown in Chai Wan	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	12	19
Tuen Mun Cafeteria Beach	/	/	/	/	15	/	/	/	12

Note 1: In general, when FSD receives a call of marine fire incident, it will deploy, apart from fire speedboats, at least two fireboats which are nearest to the incident scene for operation. The table above shows the time generally required for fireboats and fire speedboats to arrive at the typhoon shelters within their service areas. In addition, the on-shore fire stations near the shelters will also deploy fire appliances to provide speedy support, e.g. fire appliances of Tai O Fire Station can arrive at Tai O Sheltered Anchorage in five minutes to carry out fire-fighting operation for vessels near the berths.

Note 2: Fireboats No. 2 and No. 7 are currently deployed at North Point Fireboat Station and Airport Rescue Boat Berth respectively. They do not have specific service areas. FSD would deploy them to different areas of Hong Kong waters for operation according to the operational needs. Fireboat No. 6 is deployed at Tsing Yi Fireboat Station and is responsible for waters near Tsing Yi and Ma Wan, including oil terminals, oil tanker berths and dockyards, etc. in Tsing Yi. The typhoon shelter within its service area is not mentioned in the question. In addition, FSD has two command boats deployed at the Airport Rescue Boat Berths. They are dedicated to handle incidents happened in the waters near the airport.

Appendix II

Press Releases

LCQ3: Marine fire-fighting and rescue
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Following is a question by the Hon Steven Ho and a reply by the Secretary for Security, Mr Lai Tung-kwok, in the Legislative Council today (June 24):

Question:

It has been reported that a number of fires occurred at the typhoon shelters of Hong Kong in recent years, resulting in the burning down of a number of fishing vessels, including a hang trawler which was ravaged by fire near Castle Peak Bay on the 21st of last month. Quite a number of fishermen have expressed concern about marine fire safety, particularly a surge in fire hazards during the fishing moratorium and certain festivals (e.g. the Lunar New Year, Tin Hau Festival as well as Spring and Autumn Ancestral Offerings Ceremonies) when a large number of fishing vessels are berthed close to each other at the typhoon shelters. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective average response times for fireboats to arrive at various typhoon shelters to fight fire in the past three years, with a breakdown by typhoon shelter;

(2) as some fishermen have repeatedly relayed to me that their lives and properties lack protection due to insufficient fire-fighting equipment in typhoon shelters, whether the Fire Services Department (FSD) will, before the next peak season of fishing vessels berthing at typhoon shelters, expeditiously put in place more effective fire-fighting measures (e.g. deploying fireboats to station round the clock at typhoon shelters, ports and bays where fire hazards are high and inspecting whether the existing marine fire-fighting equipment is in good functionality); if FSD will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) as the implementation of a number of major infrastructure projects (e.g. the construction of an artificial island for the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge and the expansion of the airport into a three-runway system) and the designation of a new marine park in the waters of the New Territory West (NTW) will create constraints to the accessibility of the waters, whether FSD has assessed if fireboats can promptly arrive in the NTW waters where a fire has broken out to fight fire, particularly in the vicinity of the Castle Peak Bay Typhoon Shelter; whether FSD will enhance the marine fire-fighting equipment in the NTW waters or make appropriate deployment to address the fire hazards that may arise in the next peak season of fishing vessels berthing at typhoon shelters; if FSD will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply：

President,

The Fire Services Department (FSD) reviews from time to time its overall marine fire-fighting and rescue strategies in Hong Kong as well as the related equipment. FSD conducts risk assessment for different water areas, taking into account factors

including the distribution of vessels, utilisation of shipping channels, existence of high risk facilities at sea and along coastal areas etc., in deciding the location of fireboat stations and deployment of fire vessels (i.e. fireboats and fire speedboats). Upon receiving a fire call relating to vessels in Hong Kong waters, the Fire Services Communications Centre will, having regard to the circumstances, despatch the fireboats and fire speedboats nearest the incident scene to handle the fire. In addition, the nearby on-shore fire stations will deploy fire appliances to provide speedy support.

My reply to the three parts of the question is as follows:

(1) The average response times of FSD's fire vessels (including fireboats and fire speedboats) in handling marine fire calls at various typhoon shelters in the past three years are set out at the Annex.

(2) During peak seasons including the fishing moratorium and important festive periods, fishing vessels return to berth at typhoon shelters. The fire risks of the typhoon shelters may consequently increase as fishing vessels are densely anchored therein. FSD will therefore step up patrol along the shipping channels within the shelters, and conduct fire drills in the shelters before the fishing moratorium and the Lunar New Year every year in collaboration with the Hong Kong Police Force and the Marine Department (MD), so as to enhance the efficiency in fire-fighting and rescue operations and strengthen the co-ordination among relevant departments in response to marine fires.

In view of the fire risk assessment of the Tuen Mun Typhoon Shelter (TMTS) during peak seasons, FSD has specially deployed a fire speedboat to stand by in the TMTS at night since July 2012. This enables the fire speedboat to swiftly pass through the narrow shipping channels inside the shelter and arrive at the incident scene for fire-fighting and rescue operations in cases of emergency. FSD has turned this stand-by arrangement to a round-the-clock one with effect from January 2013.

On publicity and public education, FSD has been organising thematic talks on fire prevention through fishermen groups, MD and different District Offices. These talks aim to remind fishermen of the precautions when using and maintaining electrical installations on vessels and to teach them the correct way to use a fire extinguisher etc., with a view to enhancing their fire safety awareness. FSD also conducts regular checks on its fire vessels and their fire-fighting equipment to ensure that they are in good working condition at all times.

(3) FSD patrols different water areas in Hong Kong and assesses their overall fire risks from time to time. As regards the waters of the New Territories West, FSD considers that the various major infrastructure projects in progress and under planning will not affect the navigation or rescue operations of the fireboats and fire speedboats in that water area.

To facilitate the construction of the Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Link project, the existing Tuen Mun Fireboat Station located at the Tuen Mun River Trade Terminal will be re-provisioned to the waterfront at the North Portal of the Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Sub-sea Tunnel Section. By then, FSD’s fire vessels will continue to strategically cover for the north-westerly waters in Hong Kong and the TMTS.

FSD will continue to closely monitor various developments in Hong Kong waters and assess the fire risks from time to time. It will review the deployment of fire service resources and operational strategies on a regular basis and make appropriate arrangements in the light of the needs of individual water areas or periods. FSD will also continue to strengthen its fire safety publicity and educational efforts at the typhoon shelters to enhance the fire safety awareness of fishermen for fire prevention purpose.

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Annex to LCQ3

Average response times of FSD's fire vessels (including fireboat and fire speedboat) in handling marine fire incident at various typhoon shelters (2012-2014) (Note 1)

Typhoon Shelter / No. of cases/ Average response time / Year	Aberdeen	Tuen Mun (Castle Peak Bay)	Cheung Chau	Causeway Bay	Shau Kei Wan	To Kwa Wan	New Yau Ma Tei	Rambler Channel	Shuen Wan	Yim Tin Tsai
2012	3 / 13 mins	1/ 17.4 mins	1 / 13.7 mins	--	--	--	--	--	1 / Not Applicable (Note 2)	--
2013	--	4 / 8.6 mins	1 / 7.3 mins	1 / 15.2 mins	1 / 24 mins	--	1 / 15.1 mins	--	--	1 / Not Applicable (Note 2)
2014	4 / 8.5 mins	1 / 11.8 mins	--	1 / 10.3 mins	1 / 16.2 mins	1 / 25 mins	--	1 / 10 mins	--	--

Note 1: In general, when the FSD receives a call of marine fire incident, it will deploy, apart from fire speedboats, at least two fireboats which are nearest to the incident scene for operation. In addition, the adjacent on-shore fire stations will also deploy fire appliances to provide speedy support.

Note 2: As the fire had been put out by on-shore fire personnel whilst fire vessels were heading to the fire incident, the fire vessels had not arrived at the fire scene.

Appendix III

Press Releases

LCQ7: Marine fire-fighting and rescue
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Following is a question by the Hon Steven Ho and a written reply by the Secretary for Security, Mr Lai Tung-kwok, in the Legislative Council today (October 28):

Question:

It has been reported that when a No.3 alarm fire broke out at Shau Kei Wan Typhoon Shelter (SKWTS) on the day of the Mid-Autumn Festival this year, the fireboat Elite, berthed at Central, arrived at the scene 26 minutes after the outbreak of fire, and the fireboat could enter the fire scene to battle the blaze only after coordination was made by the Marine Police. In the end, ten-odd vessels were destroyed by the fire. While the authorities claimed in 2013 that the time generally required for fireboats to arrive at SKWTS was eight minutes, it actually took 24 minutes and 16.2 minutes on average for fire vessels (i.e. fireboats and fire speedboats) of the Fire Services Department to arrive at SKWTS in the past two years respectively. Some political parties and fishermen associations have repeatedly requested the authorities to enhance marine fire-fighting measures and rescue strategies, and to plan afresh the berthing arrangements in typhoon shelters, but the authorities have turned a deaf ear to their requests. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the support measures that have been and will be provided by the authorities for the victims of the aforesaid fire; of the details and progress of such work, and the difficulties encountered;

(2) whether the authorities will provide support to the victims in meeting the costs of salvage of vessels which had sunk in the fire; whether they will exercise discretion and reduce the oil cleanup charges to be borne by the victims; whether they will streamline the relevant procedures so as to relieve the burden of the victims; if they will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) given that some victims relayed that at the early stage of the incident, there was no inter-departmental counterpart responsible for co-ordinating the follow-up work, and the victims felt worn out from running around different departments, whether the authorities will strengthen the liaison among various departments in handling such follow-up work in future so as to reduce the post-accident pressure faced by the victims; if they will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(4) whether the authorities will expeditiously take the following measures to improve their marine fire-fighting measures and rescue strategies: setting out target response times for fireboats to arrive at various typhoon shelters; deploying fireboats to station round the clock at typhoon shelters where fire hazards are high; stepping up fire safety publicity and educational efforts at the typhoon shelters; enhancing the fire safety awareness of fishermen and installing suitable fire service facilities at appropriate locations along the shore of or inside typhoon shelters, etc.; if they will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(5) of the current response times in general for the various fireboats and fire speedboats to arrive at various typhoon shelters or sea bays from their respective berths (set out in the Annex 1, and put a mark "/" for areas beyond the respective

service areas of those vessels);

(6) whether the review of the berthing and sheltered space for local vessels being conducted by the Marine Department includes studies on increasing the numbers of berthing spaces for vessels and improving the demarcation of berthing spaces for different types of vessels, so as to avoid an increase in fire hazards due to overcrowding of vessels, and to prevent conflicts arising from berthing spaces being shared by different types of vessels (such as fishing vessels and yachts); if it does, of the details and when the authorities will publish the findings of the studies; if not, the reasons for that; and

(7) given that some fishermen relayed to me that, in order to cater for the development of the fishing industry, they had purchased fishing vessels with lengths exceeding the overall permitted lengths set for the typhoon shelters at which they intend to berth their vessels and they are therefore required to regularly obtain permission from the Marine Department for their vessels to enter or stay at the typhoon shelters concerned, and such a requirement has left quite a number of fishing vessels with no alternative but to berth outside the typhoon shelters or at faraway typhoon shelters, which have seriously affected the delivery of catch by fishermen and the provision of replenishment for their fishing vessels, whether the authorities will conduct a comprehensive review of the length limits for vessels permitted to enter various typhoon shelters, so as to meet the needs for the development of the local fishing industry and avoid causing inconvenience to the operations and daily lives of the fishermen, as well as prevent such length limits from bringing about additional fire hazards?

Reply:

President,

A No.3 alarm vessel fire broke out at Shau Kei Wan Typhoon Shelter (SKWTS) in the afternoon of September 27 this year. After receiving a fire report involving fishing vessels at 2.01pm that day, the Fire Services Communications Centre (FSCC) immediately turned out two fireboats (namely Fireboat No.1, which was berthed at Central Fireboat Station and was the closest to the scene of incident at the time; and Fireboat No.4, which was berthed at Aberdeen Fireboat Station), one diving support vessel and one diving support speedboat, together with five major fire appliances on land direct to the scene.

Upon arriving at SKWTS at 2.07pm (i.e. six minutes from the time of call), the land crews boarded a police launch with fire-fighting equipment and set off for the scene for fire-fighting and rescue operation. Fireboat No.1 and the diving support vessel also arrived on the scene at 2.27pm (i.e. 26 minutes from the time of call). As many vessels were leaving the typhoon shelter at that time to avoid being affected by the fire and were clustering at the waters near the access to the typhoon shelter, the vessels of the Fire Services Department (FSD) had to cautiously cruise through the dense cluster of vessels at a safe speed when entering the typhoon shelter. Moreover, when cruising inside the typhoon shelter, fire vessels had to take heed of vessels berthing at or navigating inside the typhoon shelter to keep a safe distance from other vessels so as to avoid collision.

In general, upon receiving a fire call relating to vessels in Hong Kong waters, FSCC will, having regard to the circumstances, despatch the fireboats and fire speedboats nearest the incident scene to handle the fire. In addition, the nearby on-shore fire stations will deploy fire appliances to provide speedy support. The actual time taken for fire vessels to arrive on the scene of marine fire is affected by various factors, for example, the location of relevant vessels at the time of call;

whether the vessels are engaged in other operations (including participation in regular navigation training, exercise and inspection, or handling other emergency incidents); the marine traffic at the time; waves and tides; visibility, etc. As such, the response time varies on each occasion.

My reply to the seven parts of the question, in consultation with relevant bureaux and departments, is as follows:

(1) and (3) On the day of the incident, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) contacted the owners of the affected fishing vessels to learn about the situation, and assisted the fishermen in need to apply for the Emergency Relief Fund and the Fish Marketing Organization Loan Fund for repairing or replacing their damaged vessels. AFCD is processing the relevant applications, and will continue to keep in contact with the affected owners to assist them in resuming fishing operation as soon as possible. The Marine Department (MD) has received damage reports of 29 local vessels in the incident. For vessel owners in need of assistance, MD has verified their identities, assessed the extent of damage of their vessels, and assisted them in making applications to relevant departments or authorities for relevant financial assistance, so as to tide over the difficult times.

On the other hand, in accordance with the departmental operation manual of emergency response and relief services in the event of natural disasters, the Eastern District Office (EDO) set up an inter-departmental help desk immediately at the ground floor of the Eastern Law Courts Building, which was nearest the fire scene on the day of fire. In addition to the staff from EDO, the help desk comprised members from the Social Welfare Department (SWD), the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF), FSD, MD and the Lands Department. At the help desk, personal details and practical needs of those affected by the fire were registered so that departments concerned could take follow-up support actions. EDO also provided emergency financial assistance to the families affected by the fire through the General Chinese Charities Fund. SWD referred five families to an Integrated Family Service Centre for follow-up services, and helped another family with financial difficulty to apply for Comprehensive Social Security Assistance.

(2) In general, in the event that a local vessel is in distress at sea, the Director of Marine may, according to section 56 of the Merchant Shipping (Local Vessels) Ordinance (Cap. 548), give the owner of the vessel which is stranded, abandoned or sunk in the waters of Hong Kong such directions as he thinks fits in respect of the removal, movement and so on of the vessel. The oil spillage so involved will be cleaned up by MD. For this incident, MD has already cleaned up the oil spillage at scene according to the established procedures. As regards the salvage and disposal of the damaged vessels, a number of owners have applied to MD to surrender their vessels as they have difficulty in dealing with their disposal. Having regard to the circumstances of the incident and the difficulties encountered by these owners, MD has exercised its discretion to arrange for the salvage and disposal of the wrecks for the owners at no charge.

(4) As I have pointed out in my reply to the Honourable Ho's question at the meeting of this Council on June 24 this year, FSD reviews from time to time its overall marine firefighting and rescue strategies in Hong Kong as well as the related equipment. FSD conducts risk assessment for different water areas, taking into account factors including the distribution of vessels, the utilisation of shipping channels, the existence of high risk facilities at sea and along coastal areas etc., in deciding the location of fireboat stations and deployment of fire vessels (i.e. fireboats and fire speedboats). On whether a fireboat would be deployed at a particular typhoon shelter, it depends on whether the concerned shelter is at a strategic location within

that water area, and whether the shelter is a suitable berthing location for the fireboat, for example, whether the shelter is sufficiently deep, and whether a suitable site is available in the vicinity for the construction of berthing facilities for fireboats.

Regarding the concern raised by the Honourable Ho on the response time of fire vessels, there is no standard response time for marine fire calls in Hong Kong, nor any internationally prescribed standard response time. The berthing of vessels at sea is not the same as the distribution of buildings on land. For example, vessels in larger sea areas are more widely spread and of higher mobility. Unlike the land area, there is no risk category for the marine area as reference for making regular specific risk assessments. Therefore, it is difficult to set an appropriate response time and performance pledge for individual areas of waters. That said, FSD will assess potential fire risks from time to time and flexibly deploy existing resources to strategic positions according to the overall risk of different areas of waters and inshore installations, and will put in place appropriate operational arrangements to meet the demand of individual areas or during special periods so as to respond to potential emergency incidents.

During peak seasons including the fishing moratorium and important festive periods, fishing vessels return to berth at typhoon shelters. The fire risks of the typhoon shelters may consequently increase as fishing vessels are densely anchored therein. FSD will therefore step up patrol along the shipping channels within the shelters, and conduct fire drills in the shelters before the fishing moratorium and the Lunar New Year every year in collaboration with HKPF and MD, so as to enhance the efficiency in fire-fighting and rescue operations and strengthen the co-ordination among relevant departments in response to marine fires.

On publicity and public education, FSD will organise thematic talks on fire prevention through fishermen groups, MD and various District Offices. These talks aim to remind fishermen of the precautions when using and maintaining electrical installations on vessels and to teach them the correct way to use a fire extinguisher etc. FSD will also broadcast messages about vessel fire protection and distribute fire safety publicity leaflets for vessels during the periods, with a view to enhancing the fire safety awareness of fishermen.

FSD has considered the suggestion of providing fixed fire service installations (FSI) on the shore of typhoon shelters. However, the fire-fighting capability of FSI at fixed locations can only cover a small number of vessels since vessels are not berthed at fixed locations and are dispersed throughout the typhoon shelters. These installations are therefore considered not effective in enhancing the fire safety standard of typhoon shelters. Even if fixed FSI and other emergency equipment were installed at berthing points and on the shore of typhoon shelters, such equipment should only be operated upon the arrival of the fire personnel and appliances on land in the event of fire or other emergency incidents. When fire appliances arrive directly at the coastal locations nearest the scene, on-board monitors can be used as fire-fighting equipment. Furthermore, the installation of FSI with high pressure such as monitors on land could cause danger to the public if they were used by people without professional training. In contrast, fire appliances equipped with monitors can be deployed more flexibly to specifically target at the location of the vessel on fire and facilitate fire-fighting operations effectively. That said, FSD is actively considering the addition of fire-fighting equipment, such as portable fire pumps, at fire stations near typhoon shelters to enhance the land crews' fire-fighting capability and flexibility in the typhoon shelters.

(5) The time generally required for various fireboats and fire speedboats of FSD to arrive at various typhoon shelters or bays within their main service areas from their respective berths is set out at Annex 2.

(6) and (7) MD is conducting a fundamental review on berthing and sheltered space for local vessels, and is comprehensively assessing the supply and demand of typhoon shelter space for local vessels. The review will look into the established mechanism for provision of sheltered space and the challenges faced, including operational requirements such as the demarcation of berthing spaces according to vessel types and the overall permitted lengths of vessels set for various typhoon shelters. So far, the consultant engaged by MD has preliminarily completed a large-scale survey on berthing and sheltered space arrangements for local vessels. Data analysis is being conducted and upon completion, MD will work together with representatives of the relevant departments and the trade to draw up feasible improvement proposals, having regard to the outcomes of the data analysis and practical circumstances. Relevant stakeholders, such as the Local Vessels Advisory Committee and the Harbourfront Commission, will be consulted. The review is expected to be completed in mid-2016.

Ends/Wednesday, October 28, 2015
Issued at HKT 18:30

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Annex 1

Typhoon shelter / sea bay	Fireboat								Fire Speedboat
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Aberdeen West Typhoon Shelter									
Aberdeen South Typhoon Shelter									
Causeway Bay Typhoon Shelter									
Cheung Chau Typhoon Shelter									
Kwun Tong Typhoon Shelter									
New Yau Ma Tei Typhoon Shelter									
Sam Ka Tsuen Typhoon Shelter									
Shau Kei Wan Typhoon Shelter									
To Kwa Wan Typhoon Shelter									
Tuen Mun Typhoon Shelter									
Yim Tin Tsai Typhoon Shelter									
Tai O Sheltered Anchorage									
River Trade Terminal (Tuen Mun)									
Sea bay near godown in Chai Wan									
Tuen Mun Cafeteria Beach									

Annex 2

The time generally required for fire vessels to arrive at the typhoon shelters or bays within their main service areas from their respective berths (in minutes)#

Fire vessel / Berth / Typhoon shelter / bay	Fireboat								Fire Speedboat
	1	2*	3	4	5	6*	7*	8	/
	Central Fireboat Station	North Point Fireboat Station	Cheung Chau Fireboat Station	Aberdeen Fireboat Station	Tuen Mun Fireboat Station	Tsing Yi Fireboat Station	Airport Rescue Boat Berth	North Point Fireboat Station	
Aberdeen West Typhoon Shelter	/	/	/	1.5	/	/	/	/	19
Aberdeen South Typhoon Shelter	/	/	/	6	/	/	/	/	25
Causeway Bay Typhoon Shelter	10	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	12
Cheung Chau Typhoon Shelter	/	/	3	/	/	/	/	/	29
Kwun Tong Typhoon Shelter	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	7	17
New Yau Ma Tei Typhoon Shelter	20	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	3.5
Sam Ka Tsuen Typhoon Shelter	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	7	16
Shau Kei Wan Typhoon Shelter	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	8	16
To Kwa Wan Typhoon Shelter	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	8	12
Tuen Mun Typhoon Shelter	/	/	/	/	15	/	/	/	13
Yim Tin Tsai Typhoon Shelter, Sai Kung	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	45	20
Tai O	/	/	/	/	46	/	/	/	5
River trade terminal (Tuen Mun)	/	/	/	/	10	/	/	/	8
Chai Wan Public Cargo Working Area	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	12	19
Cafeteria Beach, Tuen Mun	/	/	/	/	15	/	/	/	12

Note: # The actual time taken for fire vessels to arrive on the scene of marine fire is affected by various factors, for example, the location of relevant vessels at the time of call, whether the vessels are engaged in other operations (including participation in regular navigation training, exercise and inspection, or handling other emergency incidents); the marine traffic at the time; waves and tides; visibility, etc. As such, the response time varies on each occasion. In general, when the Fire Services Department (FSD) receives a call of marine fire incident, it will deploy, apart from fire speedboats, at least two fireboats which are nearest to the incident scene for operation. In addition, the nearby on-shore fire stations will deploy fire appliances to provide speedy support.

* Fireboats No. 2 and No. 7 are currently deployed at North Point Fireboat Station and Airport Rescue Boat Berth respectively. They do not have specific service areas. FSD would deploy them to different areas of Hong Kong waters for operation according to the operational needs. Fireboat No. 6 is deployed at Tsing Yi Fireboat Station and is responsible for waters near Tsing Yi and Ma Wan, including oil terminals, oil tanker berths and dockyards, etc. in Tsing Yi. The typhoon shelter and bays listed above are not within its service area. In addition, FSD has two command boats deployed at the Airport Rescue Boat Berths. They are dedicated to handle incidents happened in the waters near the airport.