香港特別行政區政府
保安局

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The Government of the
Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
Security Bureau

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本函檔號 Our Ref.: SEC 2/8/63
來函檔號 Your Ref.: CB2/PL/SE

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Ms Betty MA
Clerk to Panel on Security
Legislative Council
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong

16 May 2016

Dear Ms MA,

Panel on Security
Letter from Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan

Thank you for your letter dated 22 April 2016. Our response to the issues of concern raised by Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan relating to the No. 3 alarm fire which broke out at Kai Ming Building, Wan Chai in the afternoon of 19 April 2016, in consultation with the departments, is as follows:

No. 3 alarm fire at Kai Ming Building, Wan Chai

Upon receipt of a call reporting a building fire on Hennessy Road, Wan Chai at 12:47 p.m. on 19 April 2016, the Fire Services Communications Centre (FSCC) immediately dispatched eight fire appliances and an ambulance to the scene. The first fire appliance arrived at 12:49 p.m. (i.e. about two minutes from the time of call). In view of the fierce fire, the officer-in-charge at the scene upgraded the fire to No. 3 alarm at 1:03 p.m. (i.e. about 14 minutes from the time of call) and requested additional manpower and vehicles for assistance to handle the incident. The fire was put out at 2:07 p.m.

The Fire Services Department (FSD) deployed a total of 100 fire and ambulance personnel, 16 fire appliances and six ambulances to tackle the fire. During the operation, FSD sent two breathing apparatus teams to break into the two units involved in the fire and subsequently quenched the fire inside the units with two fire hoses. On the street, two Turntable Ladders, positioned near the building with their ladders extended, directed water jets to form a water curtain to prevent the fire from spreading to other floors along the external wall of the building.

Water pressure at the fire scene

Under the established mechanism, the FSCC will, at the outbreak of a No. 3 alarm fire, immediately inform the Water Supplies Department (WSD) to designate staff for an on-the-spot examination of the water supplies conditions of fire hydrants on the street (commonly known as "street hydrants") in the vicinity. Furthermore, FSD's officer-in-charge at the scene will contact WSD for assistance through the FSCC if an adjustment of street hydrants' water pressure is considered necessary in the course of firefighting and rescue operations. In this fire incident, upon upgrading to No. 3 alarm, the FSCC requested for WSD's on-scene staff assistance immediately, according to the aforesaid mechanism. On subsequent arrival at the scene of fire, WSD's officers confirmed that the Department's water supply system and the water pressure of the street hydrants remained normal.

On the other hand, the key functions of a Turntable Ladder are to effect rescue from the external wall of a building, or to direct water jets at the external wall to form a water curtain to prevent the fire from spreading to the units on other floors along the external wall of the building. It would be rather risky to direct water jets straight into the unit on fire from the Turntable Ladder, as a large amount of steam would be produced during the course, thus lowering the visibility or even scalding the fire personnel conducting firefighting or rescue operations inside the unit. In addition, the steam would also drive heavy smoke into the means of escape of the building, thereby endangering the evacuees. Therefore, the most effective firefighting strategy is for fire personnel to enter the unit on fire and direct water jets straight to the seat of fire. As far as this fire incident is concerned, the fire broke out in a unit on the eighth floor and spread to another unit on the sixth floor later on. The operational height of the two Turntable Ladders at the scene was sufficient to meet the operational needs of the fire personnel.

Firefighting equipment

All fire hoses procured by FSD are in compliance with British Standards BS6391:2009. Moreover, FSD has put in place established guidelines on fire

hose inspections. Fire personnel are required to conduct tests on fire hoses upon receipt of new ones, after using them in a fire, after repair and at intervals of 12 months. Only tested fire hoses will be used in firefighting operations. A total of eight fire hoses were damaged in this fire. One of them was suspected to be damaged by fallen objects at the scene of fire while the rest were slightly damaged. The fire personnel at the scene had immediately replaced the damaged ones with other fire hoses to ensure that the firefighting operation would not be affected. FSD will continue to prepare adequate reserve equipment in each firefighting operation for any emergency which may arise.

Fire service installations and equipment in the building concerned

As for the issue of unstable and insufficient water pressure in respect of the fire service installations and equipment (FSIs) of the building concerned, FSD's officers examined the FSIs of the building after the fire, and found that the improvement works for the fire hydrant and hose reel system of the building were still in progress. Meanwhile, FSD also found that the system was not in efficient working order.

Regarding the improvement works for the fire hydrant and hose reel system, according to Circular Letter No. 3/2008 issued by FSD to all Registered Fire Service Installation Contractors (RFSICs), if FSIs need to be shut down for maintenance and repair, the RFSIC must notify FSD at least seven days before the commencement of works. However, FSD only received a notification from the RFSIC on the shutdown of the fire service installations of the building for works in the evening of the day this fire broke out.

On another front, under the Fire Service (Installations and Equipment) Regulations (Cap. 95B), the owner of any FSIs which is installed in any premises shall keep such FSIs in efficient working order at all times, and have such FSIs inspected by an RFSIC at least once in every 12 months. Whenever an RFSIC inspects a FSI, he shall within 14 days after completion of the inspection issue to the person on whose instructions the inspection was carried out a certificate (i.e. annual inspection certificate for FSI) and forward a copy thereof to FSD.

According to FSD's records, the latest certificate of annual FSIs inspection for the building was issued by an RFSIC in March last year, which was to certify the compliance of those installations and equipment (including fire hydrant and hose reel system) with the required standards. The said certificate of annual inspection expired in March this year. Yet, as of April 19, the day this fire took place, FSD has not received any valid certificate of annual FSIs inspection for the building.

FSD has been looking into the case and will contact the relevant parties, including the RFSIC concerned, for the information required. Moreover, FSD has sent a letter to remind all RFSICs of the procedures and notification mechanism regarding the shutdown of a building's FSIs for works.

For further information, please contact the undersigned at 2810 3435 or Mr. LEUNG Kwun-hong, Assistant Director (Headquarters) of FSD at 2733 7733.

Yours sincerely,

(Alex CHAN)
for Secretary for Security

c.c. Director of Fire Services (Attn: Mr LEUNG Kwun-hong)
(Fax: 2369 0941)