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香港特別行政區政府  
保安局



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Hong Kong Special Administrative Region  
Security Bureau

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Ms Betty MA  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
Legislative Council Complex  
1 Legislative Council Road  
Central, Hong Kong

14 October 2015

Dear Ms MA,

**Panel on Security**  
**Joint letter from Hon Christopher CHUNG and Hon Steven HO**

Thank you for your letter of 30 September 2015 requesting the Government to respond to the issues of concern raised by Hon Christopher CHUNG and Hon Steven HO regarding the No. 3 alarm vessel fire which broke out at Shau Kei Wan Typhoon Shelter in the afternoon of 27 September 2015 as well as the firefighting strategy and fire service installations (FSI) at typhoon shelters. Our reply, in consultation with relevant departments, is as follows:

**The No. 3 alarm vessel fire at Shau Kei Wan Typhoon Shelter**

After receiving a fire report involving fishing vessels at Shau Kei Wan Typhoon Shelter at 2:01pm on 27 September 2015, 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 Shau Kei Wan Typhoon Shelter at 2:07pm (i.e. six minutes from the time of call), the land crews boarded a police launch with firefighting equipment and set off for the scene for firefighting 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 Shau Kei Wan 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, FSD's vessels had to take heed of vessels berthing at or navigating inside the typhoon shelter to ensure a safe distance from other vessels so as to avoid collision.

After the fireboats arrived on the scene, fireboat monitors on board were immediately utilised to combat the fire. As the wind was rather strong at that time and the vessels involved had been anchored together, the fire spread rapidly and a number of explosions on the vessels involved were heard. The officer-in-charge of the incident upgraded the fire to No. 3 alarm at 2:38pm (i.e. 31 minutes after arrival) and summoned additional fireboats and other resources for the firefighting and rescue operation.

In the entire operation, 159 personnel, eight fireboat monitors, nine jets and 8 breathing apparatus teams were deployed to combat the fire, and a total of three fireboats, one diving support vessel and two diving support speedboats, as well as 23 major fire appliances and four ambulances were mobilised. The blaze was surrounded at 3:28pm and was put under control at 4:37pm. The fire was largely extinguished at 11:57pm. During the fire, two men and three women sustained light abrasions to their limbs, and were conveyed to Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital by ambulances for treatment. According to preliminary information, 25 vessels were involved in the fire. The cause of the fire is still being investigated.

At the time of the incident, Fireboat No. 8, which was berthed at North Point Fireboat Station, was on its way to Cheung Chau Fireboat Station for conveyance of firefighting equipment. Therefore, FSCC directly turned out Fireboat No. 1, which was the fireboat nearest the scene of incident at the time, from Central Fireboat Station to the scene. Meanwhile, Fireboat No. 4, a diving support vessel and a diving support speedboat were also deployed from Aberdeen Fireboat Station, Ngong Shuen Chau Diving Base, and Marine East Division at Tui Min Hoi, Sai Kung respectively to the scene. Apart from that,

the land crews arrived at the shore of Shau Kei Wan Typhoon Shelter within six minutes from the time of call, and promptly boarded the police launch for proceeding to the scene for firefighting and rescue operation. This is an arrangement under the contingency plan for joint operation between FSD and the Marine Police in the event of fire in typhoon shelters. Besides, fire personnel would combat the fire using the firefighting equipment available on certain police launches or the portable firefighting equipment on hand according to the circumstances at the scene.

In view of the fire incident, an inter-departmental help desk comprising staff from the Home Affairs Department, the Social Welfare Department, the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF), the Marine Department (MD) and FSD was set up at the Eastern District Office at 7:30pm that night to provide assistance for people in need.

To reinstate the normal operation of the typhoon shelter as soon as possible, apart from deploying the contractors of MD to clean up the debris and oil patches in Shau Kei Wan Typhoon Shelter immediately after extinguishing the fire, MD will follow up with the affected owners regarding salvage and disposal of their burnt or sunk vessels as well as licensing issues.

### **Firefighting and rescue strategy and FSI at typhoon shelters**

We understand the public concern on FSD's firefighting and rescue strategy in the fire incident and the response time of the fire vessels, amongst other issues. 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 area are more widely spread and of higher mobility. Unlike the land area, there is no risk category for the marine area as reference for regular specific risk assessments. Therefore, it is difficult to set 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.

At present, FSD has a total of 21 deployable fire vessels<sup>1</sup>, including major and medium fireboats, rescue launches, support vessels, command boats and speedboats. These vessels are respectively berthed at Central, Aberdeen,

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<sup>1</sup> Including two command boats and eight speedboats which are vessels of the Airport Fire Contingent and are responsible for firefighting and rescue duties in waters within 5 km from the Airport.

North Point, Tsing Yi, Tuen Mun, Cheung Chau Fireboat Stations, Ngong Shuen Chau Diving Base, and the East and West Sea Rescue Berths at the Airport, providing marine firefighting, rescue and ambulance services throughout the territory. The information about the type, function, major rescue and/or firefighting equipment and staff establishment of each vessel is set out at Annex I. Besides, the 26 marine launches of HKPF are equipped with rescue and/or firefighting equipment and will support the rescue operations when needed. Details of these vessels are set out at Annex II.

With respect to the provision of FSI at typhoon shelters, FSD has considered the proposal to provide fixed FSI on the shore of typhoon shelters. However, the firefighting 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. Instead, fire appliances equipped with monitors can be deployed flexibly to target at the location of the vessel on fire and facilitate firefighting operations. That said, FSD is actively considering the addition of firefighting equipment, such as portable fire pumps, at those fire stations near typhoon shelters to enhance the land crews' firefighting capability and flexibility in the typhoon shelters.

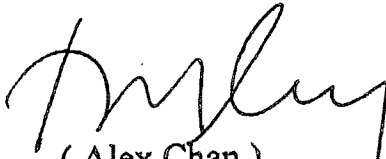
#### **Prevention of recurrence of similar events**

MD will conduct an investigation into the incident, the findings of which will be used for reference in improving the fire safety of vessels so as to prevent recurrence of similar incidents in future. Besides, FSD will continue to closely monitor the various developments within the waters of Hong Kong and assess the fire risk from time to time. Deployment of firefighting resources and operational strategies will also be reviewed regularly to ensure that appropriate deployment is made to keep in line with the demand for services in different zones of the waters and during different time intervals. MD will pay particular attention to the issue of storage of excessive fuel on board during routine patrol and initiate prosecution actions against vessels carrying fuel exceeding the permitted quantity.

To prevent recurrence of similar incidents, FSD will continue to arrange, with the assistance of fishermen groups, MD and the District Offices, fire prevention education and publicity activities for owners of vessels at typhoon shelters, with a view to enhancing their fire safety awareness. MD will also strengthen education on fire prevention and step up publicity by distributing promotional pamphlets and conducting pre-meetings with operators of target groups of vessels, such as launches, fishing and pleasure vessels, before major festivals, with a view to raising their fire safety awareness.

For further information, please contact the undersigned at 2810 3435 or Mr. LI Leung-ming of FSD at 2733 7733.

Yours sincerely,

  
( Alex Chan )  
for Secretary for Security

c.c. Director of Fire Services (Attn: Mr LI Leung-ming)  
Commissioner of Police (Attn: Mr CHEUNG Mei-hon)  
(Attn: Mr WONG Tak-cheung)  
Director of Marine (Attn: Mr CHAN Hon-bun)

Annex I

**Information about fire vessels available for deployment by the Fire Services Department**

Type of vessel	Number of vessels	Functions	Major rescue and/or firefighting equipment	Establishment
Major Fireboat	2	Major fireboats can be used as frontline command post for major maritime incidents, and for firefighting and rescue operation. At times (such as at an incident involving sunken vessel), the major fireboats are used as a rescue platform and the assembly point and triage point for casualties.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fire pump</li> <li>• Water/foam monitor</li> <li>• Fire hydrant</li> <li>• Diving cage (for conveyance of 3 divers to a depth of 60 metres)</li> <li>• Rescue speedboat equipped with fire pump and monitor</li> <li>• Survivors' cabin with lying spaces</li> <li>• Medical room</li> <li>• Ambulance equipment <sup>1</sup></li> </ul>	12-13 persons each
Medium Fireboat	4	Medium fireboats mainly carry out firefighting and rescue operations in incidents and fires occurred on small vessels, in shallow waters or onshore areas as well as waters where vessels are closely berthed, namely, typhoon shelters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fire pump</li> <li>• Water/foam cannon</li> <li>• Fire hydrant</li> <li>• Rescue speedboat</li> <li>• Ambulance equipment <sup>1</sup></li> </ul>	7-10 persons each
Rescue Boat and Support Vessel	3	The design of rescue boats enables a higher cruise speed, a more stable rescue platform and a larger transport capacity. This type of vessel mainly renders assistance in large-scale sea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fire pump</li> <li>• Water/foam monitor</li> <li>• Fire hydrant</li> <li>• Inflatable boat</li> <li>• Ambulance equipment <sup>1</sup></li> </ul>	4 persons each

<sup>1</sup> Ambulance equipment includes automatic external defibrillator, oxygen regulator system, bag-mask resuscitator, first aid box, head immobilization device, long spine board with fastrap restraint, portable stretcher, structural aluminium malleable splint, cervical collar, electrical suction unit, First Responder kit and disposable burn kit, etc.

Type of vessel	Number of vessels	Functions	Major rescue and/or firefighting equipment	Establishment
		<p>rescue operations.</p> <p>The support vessel is mainly responsible for conveying land-based FSD personnel or divers and equipment to incident scene or offshore incident scene for firefighting and rescue duties.</p>		
Diving Support Speedboat	2	To provide diving rescue platform and convey divers and equipment to incident scene for firefighting and diving rescue operations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fire pump</li> <li>• Monitor</li> <li>• Outlet</li> </ul>	2 persons each
Command Boat	2	To carry out firefighting and rescue duties in waters within 5km from the Airport.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fire pump</li> <li>• Life-raft</li> <li>• Water/foam monitor</li> <li>• Fire hydrant</li> <li>• Inflatable boat</li> <li>• Survivors' cabin with lying spaces</li> <li>• Medical room</li> <li>• Ambulance equipment <sup>1</sup></li> </ul>	8 persons each
Speedboat	8	To carry out firefighting and rescue duties in waters within 5km from the Airport.	• 4 of the speedboats are each equipped with separate fire pumps, water monitors and fire hydrants	2 persons each

**Annex II**

**Information on rescue or firefighting equipment on marine police launches of the Hong Kong Police Force**

Type of vessel	Number of vessels	Functions	Major rescue and/or firefighting equipment	Establishment
Divisional Command Launch	5	In the event of a major incident at sea, divisional command launches are used as a forward command post. They also assist in the rescue and firefighting operation, for example, by acting as the casualty assembly point and triage area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Portable stretcher</li><li>• First aid box</li><li>• Small boat</li><li>• Fire pump</li><li>• Monitor</li></ul>	19 persons each
Divisional Patrol Launch	5	In the event of a major incident at sea, divisional patrol launches assist in the rescue and firefighting operation, for example, by acting as the casualty assembly point and triage area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Portable stretcher</li><li>• First aid box</li><li>• Small boat</li><li>• Fire pump</li><li>• Monitor</li></ul>	14 persons each
Medium Patrol Launch	16	Medium patrol launches are suitable for rescue and firefighting purposes in coastal areas along shallow waters or in typhoon shelters where a large number of vessels are berthed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Portable stretcher</li><li>• First aid box</li><li>• Fire pump</li><li>• Fire hose</li></ul>	5 persons each