

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(4)1383/20-21(06)

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Panel on Public Service

Meeting on 23 August 2021

**Updated background brief on issues relating to the lifeguards
of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department**

Purpose

This paper provides background information on the manpower situation, grade structure, qualifications and training of the lifeguards of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department ("LCSD"). It also gives a brief account of past discussions of the Panel on Public Service ("the Panel") on the matter.

Background

Manpower situation and grade structure of LCSD's lifeguards

2. LCSD currently provides lifeguard services at 44 public swimming pools, 38 gazetted beaches and five water sports centres (hereinafter refer to as "the aquatic venues"). As at 1 June 2021, the staff establishment and strength of civil service lifeguards (including senior lifeguards) were 1 428 and 1 372 respectively, and the basic manpower requirement for non-civil service contract ("NCSC") seasonal lifeguards¹ and the number of seasonal lifeguards recruited were 265 and 214 respectively.² Major duties of LCSD's lifeguards are set out in **Appendix I**.

3. Lifeguards and senior lifeguards in the civil service belong to the Artisan grade and Senior Artisan grade respectively, and they are further deployed to two streams, namely the beach/swimming pool and water sports centre. Lifeguards in the Artisan grade are remunerated at Master Pay Scale ("MPS") points 5 to 8 (\$17,675 to \$21,340) whereas senior lifeguards in the Senior Artisan grade are remunerated at MPS points 8 to 10 (\$21,340 to \$24,070). Their pay scales are the same as other grades requiring similar

¹ LCSD employs seasonal lifeguards to augment the lifeguard manpower during the swimming season.

² Source: <https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202106/09/P2021060900343.htm>

qualifications under Qualification Group 6 (*Technician, Supervisory and Related Grades*) - Group II (*Craft and Skill Plus Experience, or Apprenticeship Plus Experience*).

Qualifications and training of LCSD's lifeguards

4. LCSD requires all serving lifeguards and lifeguards to be recruited to possess the Pool Lifeguard Award/Beach Lifeguard Award issued by the Hong Kong Life Saving Society ("HKLSS").³ The entry requirements for civil service lifeguards in LCSD include the possession of the Beach Lifeguard Award and Pool Lifeguard Award issued or reassessed by HKLSS within the past three years and a valid first aid certificate from the St. John Ambulance Association, Hong Kong Red Cross or Auxiliary Medical Service. As regards NCSC seasonal lifeguards, they are required to have the Beach Lifeguard Award or Pool Lifeguard Award issued or reassessed by HKLSS within the past three years. Before being considered by LCSD for appointment, applicants for the posts of civil service lifeguard and NCSC seasonal lifeguard have to pass the selection interview, trade test⁴ and other recruitment procedures (e.g. integrity checking), while applicants for civil service lifeguards have to undergo medical examination including eye-sight test and colour blindness test.

5. LCSD's Training Section provides training to civil service lifeguards to help improve their lifesaving skills and professionalism to meet the department's operational needs. Vocational training courses provided for lifeguards by LCSD are normally assessed and issued by authorized institutions which are well recognized both locally and internationally. LCSD also works in co-operation with professional departments and institutions, such as the Department of Health, the Hospital Authority, the Auxiliary Medical Service and HKLSS, in designing and providing lifeguard training.

Discussions at the Panel since 2018-2019 session

6. The Administration briefed the Panel on the qualifications, training, manpower situation and grade structure of LCSD's lifeguards and its views on the request for a grade structure review ("GSR") of civil service lifeguards at the Panel meeting on 17 December 2018. The Panel then met with relevant lifeguards' unions ("deputations") at its meeting on 18 February 2019. The major views and concerns expressed by Panel members and deputations, and the Administration's responses are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

³ HKLSS is the only organization responsible for assessing and issuing lifeguard qualifications in Hong Kong, and the lifeguard awards issued by HKLSS are internationally recognized lifesaving qualifications by the International Life Saving Federation.

⁴ Trade tests are conducted to assess candidates' physical fitness, life-saving skills and first-aid skills.

Qualifications and training of LCSD's lifeguards

7. Some deputations pointed out that some LCSD's lifeguards might have to undertake scuba diving duties, but LCSD did not set scuba diving qualification as one of the entry requirements of its lifeguards nor make the relevant training compulsory. When drowning accidents occurred, LCSD's lifeguards had to make their own assessment on whether or not to carry out scuba diving rescue.

8. Members shared the deputations' concern and questioned why the Administration did not set the training on skin diving and scuba diving rescue for LCSD's lifeguards as compulsory, especially when they might have to perform such duties in their day-to-day operations. Members further suggested reviewing the entry requirements of LCSD's lifeguards, and including the possession of scuba diving qualification as one of the entry requirements so as to ensure the safety of both LCSD's lifeguards and members of the public. The Panel also passed a motion at the Panel meeting on 18 February 2019 urging the Administration to, among others, include scuba diving rescue in the induction training courses of lifeguards and provide scuba diving rescue training for in-service lifeguards. The wording of the motion is in **Appendix II**.

9. The Administration advised that all LCSD's lifeguards had already possessed the skin diving skills for underwater rescue operation as that was an item to be assessed for the Pool Lifeguard Awards and Beach Lifeguard Awards issued by HKLSS. Scuba diving duties were not the major daily responsibility of LCSD's lifeguards. Only trained and qualified LCSD's lifeguards might, where necessary and under the supervision and instruction of senior lifeguards, use scuba diving equipment to assist in emergency underwater rescue before arrival of the diving personnel of the Fire Services Department. Although LCSD would not make training or qualification of scuba diving rescue compulsory for its lifeguards, it would provide sufficient training places to serving civil service lifeguards who enrolled in scuba diving training. LCSD also provided compulsory refresher courses on lifesaving and first aid skills to its lifeguards. From 2019 onwards, newly employed civil service lifeguards and NCSC lifeguards on long-term employment were required to complete courses on advanced skills of skin diving rescue and pass a five-metre depth skin diving test before assuming duties.

Manpower arrangements and remuneration packages of lifeguards in LCSD

10. Some deputations pointed out that as the number of qualified scuba diving lifeguards deployed for each duty shift was not stipulated in LCSD's guidelines, Amenities Assistants would distribute the duties among lifeguards in accordance with lifeguards' attendance on the day, hence there might be

occasions where lifeguards on duty were without scuba diving qualification. Members were concerned that the rescue of drowning victims might be delayed if no qualified LCSD's lifeguard could be found on the spot to perform scuba diving rescue promptly.

11. The Administration advised that every aquatic venue was equipped with lifesaving and scuba diving equipment. Under urgent circumstances, LCSD's lifeguards would immediately arrive at the scene with adequate equipment to perform rescue operations. Trained and qualified lifeguards would carry out emergency underwater search using scuba diving equipment under the supervision and instruction of senior lifeguards before the arrival of diving personnel of the Fire Services Department.

12. With a view to enhancing the efficiency of the delivery of lifesaving and lifeguard services, a member suggested allowing senior lifeguards to be promoted to Amenities Assistants III to manage the aquatic venues or assigning Amenities Assistants III with life-saving and first aid working experience to manage the aquatic venues. At the Panel meeting on 18 February 2019, the Panel passed a motion urging the Administration to study whether Senior Artisans (Swimming Pool and Beach) could be promoted to Amenities Assistant III to manage the aquatic venues, and to ensure that staff responsible for managing public swimming venues should have experience as lifeguards. The wording of the motion is in **Appendix III**.

13. The Administration explained that as senior artisan grade to which senior civil service lifeguards belonged and Amenities Assistant grade were two different grades, serving senior lifeguards could not be directly promoted to become Amenities Assistant III. Nonetheless, serving civil service lifeguards could apply for the post of Amenities Assistant III through the in-service transfer mechanism or open recruitment.

14. Members expressed great concern about the long-standing problem of shortage in LCSD's lifeguards which had affected the lifesaving services at the aquatic venues. They called on LCSD to create more civil service lifeguard posts. The Administration advised that LCSD reviewed the lifeguard manpower arrangements for the aquatic venues from time to time, taking into account the actual operational needs. LCSD implemented a pilot scheme in 2019 by engaging 40 NCSC full-year full-time lifeguards to form a regional-based special support team to cater for unforeseen manpower shortages at public swimming pools and gazetted beaches. The Administration would, where justified, create additional civil service lifeguard posts in accordance with the established procedures.

15. Regarding members' concern about the employment of NCSC seasonal lifeguards, the Administration advised that they were employed to meet service

needs which were seasonal in nature. If lifeguards were all employed on civil service terms, some of them would be left idle in winter and it would not be a prudent use of public money.

16. In response to members' views that the remuneration packages for LCSD's lifeguards were unattractive, the Administration advised that the pay increase for civil service lifeguards was set in accordance with the established annual civil service pay adjustment mechanism. With a view to maintaining the attractiveness of the pay of NCSC seasonal lifeguards, LCSD had, in accordance with the Administration's policy, made reference to various factors (e.g. the local private employment market, LCSD's fiscal position and the Composite Consumer Price Index), and kept the pay of NCSC seasonal lifeguards broadly comparable with that of their private sector counterparts.

GSR of civil service lifeguards

17. Having regard the persistent recruitment and retention difficulties of LCSD's lifeguards, members and some deputations requested the Administration to conduct a GSR for civil service lifeguards. There was also a suggestion that the Administration should create new ranks of civil service lifeguards to enhance their promotion prospects.

18. Some members were dissatisfied about the Administration's refusal to introduce a separate grade for civil service lifeguards in recognition of the professional nature of their work, so as to better attract qualified candidates to address the shortage of LCSD's lifeguards. Given that the work of lifeguards required the use of professional equipment and exercise of professional judgement, members considered it inappropriate to place civil service lifeguards and senior civil service lifeguards under the Artisan grade and Senior Artisan grade respectively. They suggested placing civil service lifeguards under the professional grades which had better remuneration and advancement so as to attract and retain qualified lifeguards.

19. The Administration explained that GSRs would only be considered for individual non-directorate civilian grades when the grades had proven and persistent recruitment and retention difficulties which could not be resolved through the regular pay surveys under the Improved Civil Service Pay Adjustment Mechanism; or there were fundamental changes to the job nature, job complexity and level of responsibilities of the grades. While the change in the job nature, job complexity and level of responsibilities might give rise to additional work, they did not of themselves constitute fundamental changes to the job nature, job complexity and level of responsibilities of the grades concerned. The Administration considered that civil service lifeguards did not meet either one of the above criteria for a GSR. Besides, civil service lifeguards were placed under the Artisan grade should not be perceived as a derogatory

treatment as all grades placed under the Artisan grade were required to possess different specific technical qualifications.

20. At its meeting on 17 December 2018, the Panel passed a motion to request the Administration to, among others, conduct a GSR so as to improve the working conditions and remuneration packages of LCSD's lifeguards and increase the number of civil service lifeguard posts. The wording of the motion is in **Appendix IV**.

Relevant questions raised at Council meetings

21. Council questions on issues relating to LCSD's lifeguards, including the grade structure, manpower situation, training and qualification, have been raised from time to time. Hyperlinks to these questions and the Administration's responses are in **Appendix V**.

Latest position

22. The Administration will brief members on the manpower situation of LCSD's lifeguards at the Panel meeting on 23 August 2021.

Relevant papers

23. A list of relevant papers is set out in Appendix V.

Council Business Division 4
Legislative Council Secretariat
18 August 2021

**Major duties of lifeguards of
the Leisure and Cultural Services Department**

Artisan (Beach/Swimming Pool)

- (a) Lifesaving duties;
- (b) First aid duties;
- (c) Assisting in law enforcement and maintenance of order;
- (d) Assisting in cleansing work; and
- (e) Winter work duties.

Artisan (Lifeguard at Water Sports Centre) and Artisan (Beach/ Swimming Pool) serving in water sports centres

- (a) Performing lifesaving and first aid duties;
- (b) Assisting in law enforcement and maintenance of order;
- (c) Patrolling water sports activities areas on rescue boat and watching over participants of water sports activities;
- (d) Directing participants to get in and out of crafts and towing/launching the crafts into water and taking them out of water and back to the water sports centre;
- (e) Assisting in issuing and collecting water sports equipment/gear and assuring that they are in good condition before and after use;
- (f) Cleansing and minor repairs and maintenance of water sports equipment;
- (g) Assisting in cleansing work; and
- (h) Winter work duties.

Senior Artisan (Beach/Swimming Pool)

- (a) Deputising the Amenities Assistant in-charge;
- (b) Supervising Artisans (Beach/Swimming Pool), contract lifeguards and other junior staff in carrying out daily work and district winter work programmes;
- (c) Directing and performing lifesaving operations and first aid services, inspecting lifesaving and first aid equipment and ensuring that they are adequate and serviceable at all times;
- (d) Training of Artisans (Beach/Swimming Pool) and contract lifeguards, and assisting in implementing the departmental drill programmes; and
- (e) Assisting in enforcing the relevant by-laws/regulations.

Senior Artisan (Lifeguard at Water Sports Centre) and Senior Artisan (Beach/Swimming Pool) serving in water sports centres

- (a) Supervising Artisans (Lifeguard at Water Sports Centre), contract lifeguards and other junior staff;
- (b) Directing and performing lifesaving, rescue of crafts and first aid services;
- (c) Training of Artisans (Lifeguard at Water Sports Centre) and contract lifeguards in drilling, and implementing the rescue operations;
- (d) Supervising and performing the inspection, issuing, maintenance and minor repairs of water sports equipment;
- (e) Maintaining proper records of water sports equipment, ensuring that they are safe to use and in sea-worthy condition; arranging necessary maintenance and replacement to defected crafts, gears and fittings;
- (f) Arranging necessary training in respect of water sports skills and maintenance of equipment to lifeguards and junior staff;
- (g) Arranging roster and daily duty posts for lifeguards and junior staff;
- (h) Assisting centre instructor to run training courses;
- (i) Performing janitor duty and maintenance of order and law enforcement where applicable;
- (j) Ensuring the motor rescue boats are used and kept properly;
- (k) Assisting users of water sports centres to use the crafts properly; and
- (l) Inspecting lifesaving and first aid equipment regularly and ensuring that they are adequate and serviceable at all times.

Source: [Annex 1 of LC Paper No. CB\(4\)145/18-19\(01\)](#)

立法會CB(4)556/18-19(01)號文件
LC Paper No. CB(4)556/18-19(01)

公務員及資助機構員工事務委員會會議

**在2019年2月18日的會議上就
議程項目III"與康樂及文化事務署救生員有關的事宜"通過的議案**

為保障使用泳灘的公眾及當值救生員的安全，本會要求政府：(1)將「水肺潛水拯救」加入救生員的入職訓練項目，及為在職救生員提供「水肺潛水拯救」訓練。(2)訂立徒手潛水及水肺潛水任務的詳細標準指引(包括標準任務程序及裝備使用、更換及保養指引)。

動議人：譚文豪議員

(Translation)

Panel on Public Service

Motion passed under agenda item III "Issues relating to the lifeguards of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department" at the meeting on 18 February 2019

To ensure the safety of beach users and lifeguards on duty, this Panel requests the Government to (1) include "scuba diving rescue" in the induction training courses of lifeguards and provide "scuba diving rescue" training for in-service lifeguards; (2) formulate detailed standards and guidelines for carrying out skin diving and scuba diving rescue duties, including standard procedures for carrying out such duties and guidelines on the use, replacement and maintenance of relevant equipment.

Moved by: Hon Jeremy TAM Man-ho

立法會CB(4)556/18-19(02)號文件
LC Paper No. CB(4)556/18-19(02)

公務員及資助機構員工事務委員會會議

**在2019年2月18日的會議上就
議程項目III"與康樂及文化事務署救生員有關的事宜"通過的議案**

為改善公務員救生員待遇及晉升階梯，以及更有效地管理康文署水上活動中心、泳池及泳灘，本會要求政府研究可否讓高級技工(泳池及泳灘)晉升至管理水上活動中心、泳池或泳灘的三級康樂助理員。此外，管理公眾游泳場所的職員亦應擁有救生員經驗。

譚文豪議員動議並經蔣麗芸議員修正

(Translation)

Panel on Public Service

Motion passed under agenda item III "Issues relating to the lifeguards of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department" at the meeting on 18 February 2019

To improve the remuneration packages and promotion pathways of civil service lifeguards and the effectiveness of the management of water sports centres, swimming pools and beaches under the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, this Panel requests the Government to study whether Senior Artisans (Swimming Pool and Beach) can be promoted to Amenities Assistants III with responsibility for managing water sports centres, swimming pools or beaches. Furthermore, staff responsible for managing public swimming venues should have experience as lifeguards.

Moved by Hon Jeremy TAM Man-ho as amended by Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan

立法會CB(4)348/18-19(01)號文件
LC Paper No. CB(4)348/18-19(01)

公務員及資助機構員工事務委員會

**在2018年12月17日的會議上就
議程項目III"與康樂及文化事務署救生員有關的事宜"通過的議案**

鑒於季節性救生員近年出現招聘困難，未能減輕現有公務員救生員於旺季的工作量及壓力，並導致部份泳池局部封閉，嚴重影響服務質素、公眾安全，以及同工的工作士氣；因此，本事務委員會要求政府須盡快改善救生員的工作條件，以吸引新人入行，當中包括：增加公務員救生員的職位、改善救生員的薪酬待遇水平、設立醫療總監及救生員訓練學校、制訂職前培訓，以及進行職系架構檢討等。

動議人：何啟明議員

(Translation)

Panel on Public Service

**Motion passed under agenda item III on "Issues relating to the lifeguards of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department"
at the meeting on 17 December 2018**

In view of the difficulties in recent years in recruiting seasonal lifeguards which entail a failure to alleviate the workload and pressure of current civil service lifeguards during peak seasons as well as lead to partial closure of some swimming pools and seriously undermine service quality, public safety as well as staff morale, this Panel requests the Government to improve the working conditions of lifeguards as soon as possible in order to attract new blood by, among others, increasing the number of civil service lifeguard posts, improving the remuneration packages of lifeguards, creating a Medical Director post, establishing a lifeguard training school, arranging pre-employment training and conducting a grade structure review.

Moved by : Hon HO Kai-ming

**Issues relating to the lifeguards
of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department**

List of relevant papers

Meeting/Event	Date	References
Panel on Public Service	17 December 2018 (Item III)	Agenda Administration's follow-up response to issues raised at the Panel meeting Administration's response to the motion passed at the meeting Minutes
	18 February 2019 (Item III)	Agenda Administration's follow-up response to issues raised at the Panel meeting Administration's follow-up response to issues raised at the Panel meeting Administration's response to the two motions passed at the meeting Minutes
Council Meeting	7 November 2018	Council question raised by Hon CHAN Hak-kan on the lifeguards employed by Leisure and Cultural Services Department
	16 January 2019	Council question raised by Hon HO Kai-ming on the civil service lifeguards under the Leisure and Cultural Services Department

Meeting/Event	Date	References
	16 January 2019	<u>Council question raised by Hon WU Chi-wai on the manpower situation of lifeguards</u>
	17 April 2019	<u>Council question raised by Hon MA Fung-kwok on the lifeguards employed by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department</u>
	5 June 2019	<u>Council question raised by Hon HO Kai-ming on the manpower situation of lifeguards</u>
	19 June 2019	<u>Council question raised by Hon Elizabeth QUAT on the work of civil service lifeguards</u>
	23 October 2019	<u>Council question raised by Hon Vincent CHENG on the manpower situation of lifeguards</u>
	9 June 2021	<u>Council question raised by Hon LUK Chung-hung on manpower of lifeguards</u>
	7 July 2021	<u>Council question raised by Hon YUNG Hoi-yan on management of public swimming pool complexes</u>