

# Chapter 6

## Fire Services Department

### Overview

#### *Role of Fire Services Department*

6.1 Originally formed under the Police Force in 1868, the Fire Brigade was separated from the Police Force in 1941 and renamed as the Hong Kong Fire Services Department in 1961. The ambulance service has been part of the Department since 1919, providing only emergency services in the early years. It was in 1953 that all government ambulance resources, including those providing non-emergency services, were absorbed within the Fire Brigade. The ambulance service was subsequently reorganised into the Ambulance Division of the FSD in 1966.

6.2 The FSD operates under the Fire Services Ordinance (Cap. 95), being responsible for fighting fire and protecting life and property in case of fire or other calamities; enforcing laws on fire safety; giving advice on fire protection measures and fire hazards; promoting public awareness on the importance of fire safety; providing pre-hospital care to the sick and injured and conveying them to hospitals. With the exemplary commitment and devotion of the Fire Services staff, the community is assured of efficient and reliable fire and ambulance services at all times throughout the year.

#### *Organisation Structure*

6.3 The FSD is headed by the Director of Fire Services, who is underpinned by one Deputy Director with the support of 16 directorate officers (including one civilian post). The Department is organised into seven Commands and an Administration Division, each responsible for specific areas of work –

- (a) *the Operational Fire Commands in Hong Kong, Kowloon and the New Territories* are responsible for combating fire, saving lives and property on land and at sea, as well as conducting regular inspections of fire service installations and equipment in buildings, etc.;
- (b) *the Fire Safety Command and the Licensing and Certification Command* are responsible for drawing up fire safety policies, enforcing fire safety legislation, formulating and certifying fire safety standards of new building projects, regulating the storage, use and conveyance of dangerous goods through licensing, and administering the acceptance testing of fire service installations and equipment, etc.;
- (c) *the Ambulance Command* provides emergency ambulance service and urgent inter-hospital transfers, as well as handles non-emergency inter-hospital transfers on off-shore islands, etc.;
- (d) *the Headquarters Command* is responsible for formulating departmental policy, providing support and administrative service for various units, fire-fighting and rescue operations in the Airport and aquatic searches and rescues within Hong Kong waters, operation of a compression chamber for treating patients suffering from decompression illness and providing hyperbaric oxygen treatment, etc. It also takes charge of the Mobilising and Communications Group for receiving emergency calls from the public and despatching appropriate resources to the scene of an accident; and
- (e) *the Administration Division* is responsible for handling personnel matters and providing general administration support services.

### ***Staffing***

6.4 As at 1 January 2008, the Department had an establishment of 8 720 posts in the disciplined services grades comprising 17 directorate posts, 1 007 posts in the Officer grades,

and 7 696 posts in the Rank and File grades. Together, they constituted 94% of the FSD's total establishment. Their distribution by command at the non-directorate level is summarised in *Table 6.1*.

*Table 6.1: Distribution of FSD non-directorate posts as at 1 January 2008*

Division	Rank & File Grades		Officer Grades		Total
	Fireman	Ambulanceman	Station Officer/ Divisional Officer	Ambulance Officer	
Hong Kong	1 546 (28.5%)	-	177 (20.1%)	-	1 723 (19.8%)
Kowloon	1 212 (22.3%)	-	153 (17.4%)	-	1 365 (15.7%)
The New Territories	1 977 (36.4%)	-	247 (28.1%)	-	2 224 (25.6%)
Fire Safety	31 (0.6%)	-	86 (9.8%)	-	117 (1.3%)
Licensing and Certification	51 (0.9%)	-	81 (9.2%)	-	132 (1.5%)
Ambulance	-	2 263 (99.8%)	-	128 (100%)	2 391 (27.5%)
Headquarters	611 (11.3%)	5 (0.2%)	135 (15.4%)	-	751 (8.6%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>5 428</b> (100%)	<b>2 268</b> (100%)	<b>879</b> (100%)	<b>128</b> (100%)	<b>8 703</b> (100%)

### ***Grade and Rank Structure***

6.5 There are three streams of disciplined services staff in the FSD. The Fire Stream is responsible for fire-fighting and rescue, enforcement of fire protection laws and fire safety legislation, advising the public on fire protection measures and enhancing public awareness in fire safety. The Ambulance Stream takes charge of operations of the ambulance service. The Mobilising and Communications (MC) Stream, also known as the Control Stream, is responsible for the overall control and communications in respect of the mobilisation of fire-fighting and ambulance resources for fire and emergency services.

6.6 The Fire Stream consists of two non-directorate grades and twelve ranks. Similarly, the Ambulance Stream has two grades and ten ranks. The MC Stream shares with the Fire Stream in having

the same two grades of the Station Officer (StnO) and Fireman (Fn) and the same four ranks of the Senior Station Officer (SStnO), StnO, Principal Fireman (PFn) and Senior Fireman (SFn). Moreover, there are six ranks at the directorate level. Details of their rank structures and existing pay scales are set out at [Appendix 12](#).

## **Relevant Considerations**

### ***Job Factors and Special Factors***

6.7 We have examined the job factors and special factors in regard to the Fire Services grades and ranks. Some key features contained in the submissions received or represented to us during the GSR are highlighted in the following paragraphs.

#### Fire Stream

6.8 In carrying out fire-fighting and rescue missions, staff in the Fire Stream have to carry heavy equipment weighing around 30 kilograms and wear thick protective clothing. They are exposed to danger, hazard and hardship arising from unpredictable and dangerous working environment ranging from fire, explosion, natural disasters to major incidents involving chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear agents; inhalation of smoke; and exposure to extreme heat, hazardous substances and infectious diseases. Their service is needed most during emergencies and inclement weather and in dangerous locations, such as steep terrains, inside sewers or under water, with low visibility, poor accessibility and limited communication network. They have to make immediate and accurate decisions based on their knowledge, experience and the information available on the scene. They are subject to physical and psychological stress arising from unpredictability of calls, the requirement to maintain high alertness as well as close media and public scrutiny. They have to keep themselves updated and equipped with a wide spectrum of knowledge and skills relating to fire-fighting and life-saving skills and equipment. The conditioned hours of work of the operational staff of the Fire Stream are 54 hours per week, which is the longest as compared with the other Disciplined Services. They work on a roster pattern of “24 hours on, 48 hours off”.

## Ambulance Stream

6.9 The staff working in the Ambulance Stream must stay alert at all times in performing their duties, which often involve time-critical decisions and action affecting the health and lives of the patients. They have to face health hazard, hardship and risk arising from exposure to infectious diseases, contact with violent or disturbed patients and the requirement to handle unpleasant duties or traumatic events. They encounter stress due to heavy workload as well as close media and public scrutiny. The conditioned hours of the Ambulance Officer (AO) and Ambulanceman (Ambn) grades are 44 and 48 per week respectively and the staff are required to perform shift.

## Mobilising and Communications Stream

6.10 The MC Stream is the first contact point between the public and the FSD, being responsible for receiving emergency calls from the public and despatching appropriate resources including fire appliances, ambulances, fire boats, officers and equipment to the incident scene. In accordance with the Department's performance pledge, staff in the MC Stream have to complete the call taking and despatch process within 35 seconds. They have to make prompt and accurate decisions for mobilising staff and equipment within tight time constraints and using the increasingly sophisticated communication system. They have to face escalating pressure due to increasing workload, rising public expectations and close public scrutiny.

## ***Changes Since Last Reviews***

6.11 In response to changes in the political and social environment and the demand for quality service, the FSD has implemented a number of new initiatives and taken up additional duties. The changes include (but are not limited to) the following –

- (a) *Fire-fighting and rescue*: The Department's performance pledge for fire-fighting and rescue services is to respond to 92.5% of total building fire calls within six minutes in built-up areas and within nine to 23 minutes in areas of dispersed risks and isolated developments. In addition, the Department

took over from the British Military the responsibilities for diving rescue operations in 1997, set up the Special Rescue Squad (SRS) to deal with major incidents and disasters in and outside Hong Kong in 2000, launched the First Responder (FR) Programme<sup>19</sup> to provide prompt basic life support services in 2003 and commenced performing search and rescue duties in emergency operations outside Hong Kong in 2005. The construction of high-rise buildings and long and deep tunnels, and traffic accidents and gas leakage incidents have also increased the work complexity despite the provision of better equipment and task-specific training.

- (b) *Fire prevention, protection and education* : Following enactment of new ordinances, enforcement of fire prevention and protection legislation has stepped up. To cope with the growth in workload, the Fire Protection Command was split into the Licensing and Certification Command and the Fire Safety Command in 1999 and the three Operational Commands are also required to assist in fire protection duties since 2004. The introduction of fire engineering approach for approving fire safety designs of buildings and infrastructure and the emergence of new dangerous goods are also challenges. Recognising the importance of fire prevention, the FSD also launched the Fire Safety Ambassador (FSA) Scheme to promote a fire safety culture in the community. By the end of 2007, the FSD has successfully recruited and trained around 88 000 FSA.
- (c) *Ambulance service* : The Department's performance pledge is to respond to 92.5% of all emergency ambulance calls within 12 minutes from the time of call to the arrival of an ambulance at the street address. With the increase in the number of ambulance calls received per year from 401 000 in

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<sup>19</sup> The FSD launched the FR Programme in July 2003 in seven fire stations to provide prompt basic life support services to enhance the survival rate of certain casualties/patients.

1987 to 612 000 in 2007, the workload per staff has been rising despite an increase in staff establishment. The work of the ambulance personnel has expanded to include paramedic ambulance service in 1991, which was subsequently extended to all ambulances and ambulance motorcycles since February 2005. Starting from 2006, the ambulance personnel have been administering immediate treatment at the accident scene under the Rapid Response Vehicle Scheme<sup>20</sup>. The possible legal and ethical consequences of their judgement and the frequent need to work under transparent environment are additional stress to the ambulance staff.

- (d) *Mobilising and communications* : The escalating number of calls over the years, the introduction of the First Responder Programme, the implementation of the Third Generation Mobilising System in 2005 and the requirement to set up a mobile command unit on site during a No. 3 fire alarm incident have increased the workload and complexity of work of the MC staff, who have to act speedily and independently to determine the nature of calls and resources to be deployed to the rescue scene.

6.12 Some workload indicators of the FSD are shown at **Appendix 13**. We observe that, in general, fire calls are decreasing, which are due in part to the vigilant enforcement action and preventive measures taken by the Fire Services staff. On the other hand, we see increasing number of special service calls and ambulance calls. The demand for FR service is also rising rapidly since its introduction in 2003.

### ***Recruitment***

6.13 Based on the statistics provided by the FSD management, we do not see any recruitment difficulties in both the Rank and File and the Officer grades. Some relevant statistics are shown in *Table 6.2*.

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<sup>20</sup> The Rapid Response Vehicle Scheme was introduced in 2006. The Ambulance Officers, having received specific training, will ride on emergency saloon cars with siren, beacon lights and life saving equipment to the scene for immediate treatment.

*Table 6.2: Recruitment statistics in the FSD (most recent recruitment exercises)*

<b>Rank (year of recruitment exercise)</b>	<b>Target no. of recruits</b>	<b>Applications received</b>	<b>Offers made</b>
Fireman (2007-08)	91	2 067	113
Station Officer (Fire) (2005-06)	40	1 408	43
Ambulanceman (2007-08)	79	3 369	134
Ambulance Officer (2005-06)	10	2 716	20
Senior Fireman (Control) (2006-07)	23	9 241	29
Station Officer (Control) (2006-07) <sup>Note</sup>	5	13	5

(Note : Recruitment of Station Officer (Control) for the past ten years has been made through in-service appointment of Principal Firemen (Control).)

### ***Retention***

6.14 In general, there is no retention problem in the FSD. However, we observe that wastage in the Senior Fireman (Control) (SFn(C)) rank is on the rising trend, as shown in *Table 6.3*.

*Table 6.3 : Wastage from the entry ranks of the Rank and File and Officer grades in the past five years*

<b>Recruitment ranks</b>		<b>2003-04</b>	<b>2004-05</b>	<b>2005-06</b>	<b>2006-07</b>	<b>2007-08</b>
Fireman	Wastage	1	3	3	6	13
	As % of strength	0.03%	0.08%	0.08%	0.17%	0.35%
Station Officer (Fire)	Wastage	0	0	1	0	1
	As % of strength	-	-	0.17%	-	0.16%
Ambulanceman	Wastage	1	2	4	6	18
	As % of strength	0.07%	0.14%	0.29%	0.43%	1.27%
Ambulance Officer	Wastage	1	0	0	1	0
	As % of strength	1.59%	-	-	1.54%	-
Senior Fireman (Control)	Wastage	1	3	7	5	5
	As % of strength	0.77%	2.36%	5.60%	4.13%	4.14%
Station Officer (Control)	Wastage	0	0	0	0	0
	As % of strength	-	-	-	-	-

(Note : Natural wastage is excluded.)



## ***Career Progression***

6.15 Promotion is subject to a range of factors, such as availability of vacancies, operational need, age profile of serving officers and individual merit. That said, we note from the statistics that the time taken for a Fn and an Ambn to be promoted to SFn and Senior Ambulanceman (SAmbn) is relatively long given that the rank ratios of Fn to SFn and Ambn to SAmbn are at 3.5 : 1 and 2.6 : 1 respectively as at 1 January 2008. On the other hand, there is a mechanism to enable staff in the SFn/PFn, SAmbn/Principal Ambulanceman (PAmbn) and Principal Fireman (Control) (PFn(C)) ranks to join the basic ranks of the Officer grades through in-service appointment, subject to their having five years of service in the FSD and fulfilling other specified criteria such as physical test and qualifications.

6.16 In the Officer cadre, StnO and Station Officers (Control) (StnO(C)) are eligible for advancement, under the through scale arrangement, to SStnO and Senior Station Officers (Control) (SStnO(C)) respectively, subject to completion of five years of service and obtaining the relevant qualification for promotion. For AO where through scale arrangement is not applicable, promotion to Senior Ambulance Officer (SAO) rank is also relatively favourable compared with equivalent ranks in other Disciplined Services. Promotion beyond the SStnO and SAO ranks is not so favourable due to the smaller number of established posts at the higher ranks.

6.17 Similar to the situation in the other Disciplined Services, we note that a significant number of the Fire Services staff are serving on the maximum pay point of their respective ranks, as detailed in *Table 6.4*.

*Table 6.4 : Entry rank officers at maximum point (as at 1 January 2008)*

<b>Rank</b>	<b>No. on maximum</b>	<b>% of total</b>
Fireman	2 822	77%
Senior Fireman	450	41%
Station Officer/Senior Station Officer (combined establishment)	389	58%
Ambulanceman	970	67%
Ambulance Officer	7	10%

(Note : The figures for Senior Fireman and Station Officer/Senior Station Officer also cover those in the MC Stream.)

## **Analysis and Recommendations**

### ***Entry Qualifications***

6.18 Both the management and staff have proposed adjustments to the entry qualifications and entry pay of Fn, SFn (C), StnO, Ambn and AO ranks. As elaborated in Chapter 3, we recommend that the current entry qualifications for all grades and ranks be maintained at this juncture pending an overall review of the Qualification Grouping system in the future, taking into account all new developments and their implications on the civil service and the society as a whole. We also propose that no multiple entry arrangement for higher entry qualification be allowed in the Rank and File grades. For the considerations stated in Chapter 3 (paragraph 3.17), we have no objection to the request for removing the sub-entry level below five passes in the HKCEE for the Fn and Ambn ranks. The existing basic entry qualification to the Fn and Ambn ranks on five passes in the HKCEE should remain unchanged. **(Recommendation 6.1)**

### ***Fire Stream***

#### **Fireman Grade**

6.19 Recruitment and retention in the Fn grade are reasonably satisfactory under the existing pay and conditions of service. We consider the entry pay appropriate. Similar to most Disciplined Services, the Fn rank has one incremental jump at the end of one year of service followed by another incremental jump at the end of five years of service upon passing the qualifying examination for promotion. We consider these arrangements generally effective in retaining staff in the early years of their career.

6.20 At present, the Fn rank is given Long Service Increments (LSI) on completion of 18 and 25 years of service. We understand that the nature of fire-fighting and rescue work necessitates a strong workforce in the basic rank. With the smaller establishment in the SFn rank, promotion opportunity for Fn is rather limited. To recognise the long and meritorious service of these experienced staff, we propose in Chapter 3 (paragraph 3.21 to 3.24) that more LSI should be given and existing ones restructured so that Fn can receive

an increment after satisfactory completion of 12, 18, 24 and 30 years of service respectively. **(Recommendation 6.2)**

6.21 Taking into account the job factors and other relevant considerations arising from changes since the last reviews, we further recommend raising the maximum pay of the Fn rank by one point and increasing the minimum and maximum pay of the SFn rank by one pay point. For the PFn rank, we note that this rank has assumed a greater command role and leadership functions over the years, particularly following the implementation of process re-engineering measures and other initiatives resulting in delegation of certain less complex functions from the Officer cadre to the top tier of the Fn grade. The trend may continue. The management and staff have requested the creation of an additional rank above the PFn to perform the extra duties, including standing in as the Officer-in-charge of the major pump during temporary absence of StnO, overseeing the manpower and daily manning of SFn and Fn ranks in the divisional level, conducting inspections to special risk areas, and organising advanced and specialised training in the Fire Services Training School. Having considered the nature of work of the Fn grade, we consider the present command structure appropriate and do not see sufficient functional justifications for creating a new rank above the PFn rank. To recognise the increased responsibilities and functions of the PFn rank over the years, we propose to raise its maximum pay point by two points and increasing the minimum by one pay point. With these improvements, the pay scale of the Fn grade will be revised as set out below **(Recommendation 6.3)** –

Rank	Existing Pay Scale	Recommended Pay Scale
Fireman	GDS(R) 3-13 plus two Long Service Increments, one each on completion of 18 and 25 years of in-rank service	GDS(R) 4*-14 (*sub-entry removed) plus four Long Service Increments, one each on completion of 12, 18, 24 and 30 years of in-rank service
Senior Fireman	GDS(R) 14-22	GDS(R) 15-23
Principal Fireman	GDS(R) 23-27	GDS(R) 24-29

Station Officer/Divisional Officer Grade

6.22 In line with the principle of meritocracy and as set out in Chapter 3 (paragraph 3.37), we recommend restructuring the pay scale of the StnO/SstnO rank, which has through scale arrangement, such that the maximum pay point of StnO is capped below the rank scale of the SStnO. With this recommendation, only officers who have acquired the necessary qualifications for promotion and fulfilled the requisite in-rank service requirement can advance to the pay scale of the SStnO rank. Those who have yet to acquire the necessary qualifications for promotion shall remain on the restructured pay scale of the StnO rank. In the light of reasonable expectations of serving staff, we recommend that grandfathering arrangement be made upon implementation. **(Recommendation 6.4)**

6.23 The management and staff propose the setting up of a mechanism for early advancement of StnO with exceptional qualities to SStnO after three years of service in the rank, in parallel to the existing service requirement of five years, in a manner similar to the existing practice of the Police Inspector/Senior Inspector ranks. As set out in Chapter 3 (paragraphs 3.29 to 3.37), we recommend tightening up the existing through scale arrangement. We therefore do not support the proposal.

6.24 Taking into account the changes in job factors and increased responsibilities of the StnO/Divisional Officer (DO) grade, we recommend enhancing the pay of the non-directorate ranks as follows **(Recommendation 6.5)** –

Rank	Existing Pay Scale	Recommended Pay Scale
Station Officer	GDS(O) 5-25	GDS(O)5 –21 <sup>#</sup> ( <sup>#</sup> through scale modified)
Senior Station Officer	GDS(O) 21-25	GDS(O) 22-26
Assistant Divisional Officer	GDS(O) 26-31	GDS(O) 27-32
Divisional Officer	GDS(O) 32-35	GDS(O) 33-36
Senior Divisional Officer	GDS(O) 36-38	GDS(O) 37-39

6.25 There is a proposal that LSI be introduced to the StnO and SStnO ranks to boost staff morale. LSI are granted to recognise

and motivate loyal, meritorious and long-serving Rank and File staff who have to stay in the basic ranks due to the unique command structure of the Disciplined Services. We see no strong grounds for awarding LSI to the StnO/DO grade which is in the Officer cadre.

### ***Ambulance Stream***

#### Ambulanceman Grade

6.26 Recruitment is satisfactory in the grade and we recommend that the entry pay of the Ambn rank should remain unchanged. The Ambn rank already has two incremental jumps, one on completion of one year of in-rank service and another upon passing the qualifying examination for promotion to SAmbn and having five years of service. We consider these arrangements generally effective in retaining staff in the early years of the Ambn's career.

6.27 At present, similar to many Rank and File grades, a large proportion of the Ambn staff remain on the maximum pay point for years. In recognition of the long and meritorious service of these experienced staff, we propose in Chapter 3 (paragraphs 3.21 to 3.24) to introduce more LSI and restructure them so that the Ambn rank can receive one LSI each after satisfactory completion of 12, 18, 24 and 30 years of service. (**Recommendation 6.6**)

6.28 Taking into account the enhanced job factors and other relevant considerations arising from changes since the last reviews, particularly the development of paramedic ambulance service, we further recommend raising the maximum pay of the Ambn rank by one pay point and increasing the minimum and maximum pay of the SAmbn by one pay point each. For the PAmbn rank, we note that in addition to management and supervisory responsibility, they are responsible for the assessment, scene evaluation and treatment provided for the sick and injured as well as documentation work. They have also assumed greater command role and leadership functions over the years as a result of process re-engineering measures and delegation of less complex responsibilities from the Officer cadre. In this regard, the management and staff propose creating a new rank of Senior Principal Ambulanceman to enhance co-operation and liaison with hospital staff and cope with the complexities of training activities. We note that most of the functions are undertaken either

by the AO or PAmbn. Having considered the nature of the work of the Ambn grade, we consider the present command structure appropriate and hence do not support the proposal for creation of an additional rank. To recognise the increased responsibilities and functions of the rank over the years, we propose to raise the maximum pay point of the PAmbn by two points and increasing the minimum pay by one point. With these improvements, the pay scales of the Ambn grade will be revised as set out below (**Recommendation 6.7**) –

Rank	Existing Pay Scale	Recommended Pay Scale
Ambulanceman	GDS(R) 3-13 plus two Long Service Increments, one each on completion of 18 and 25 years of in-rank service	GDS(R) 4*-14 (*sub-entry removed) plus four Long Service Increments, one each on completion of 12, 18, 24 and 30 years of in-rank service
Senior Ambulanceman	GDS(R) 14-22	GDS(R) 15-23
Principal Ambulanceman	GDS(R) 23-27	GDS(R) 24-29

6.29 The staff union proposes re-titling the Ambn grade as “Paramedic grade” and restructuring it to a four-tier grade with new pay scales comparable to the nursing grade. We do not support the proposal, taking into account the fact that the job factors of the two grades are different and that there are no functional justifications to introduce a new tier in the grade. As mentioned in paragraph 6.28, we consider the present grade structure appropriate and do not support renaming the Ambn grade as “Paramedic grade”.

6.30 The management has also requested granting an incremental jump to those in the Ambn rank who have acquired the Emergency Medical Assistant II (EMA II) qualification and are required to stand in as ambulance supervisors at times. We have considered this proposal and do not find sufficient grounds for granting an incremental jump in this regard.

#### Ambulance Officer Grade

6.31 While we appreciate the staff’s sentiments and keen interests underlying the requests for through scale, we have explained

in Chapter 3 (paragraphs 3.29 to 3.35) the unique historical background of through scale and reaffirmed the view of the Rennie Committee that the arrangement should not be further extended to other grades. We also note the staff concerns about advancement opportunities for mid-career officers and see the need to sustain morale and motivation. We therefore recommend introducing two new incremental jumps to the AO rank, one each on completion of five years and eight years of in-rank service respectively and subject to their having obtained the necessary qualifications for promotion (**Recommendation 6.8**). Together with the existing incremental jump awarded upon completion of one year's service, the AO rank will have a total of three incremental jumps.

6.32 Taking into account the enhanced job factors and increased responsibilities of the ranks in the AO grade, we recommend adjusting the pay of the non-directorate members as follows (**Recommendation 6.9**) –

Rank	Existing Pay Scale	Recommended Pay Scale
Ambulance Officer	GDS(O) 5-20	GDS(O)5 -21
Senior Ambulance Officer	GDS(O) 21-25	GDS(O) 22-26
Superintendent (Ambulance)	GDS(O) 26-31	GDS(O) 27-32
Assistant Chief Ambulance Officer	GDS(O) 32-35	GDS(O) 33-36
Senior Assistant Chief Ambulance Officer	GDS(O) 36-38	GDS(O) 37-39

6.33 It has been represented to us that staff in the Superintendent (Ambulance) (S(Amb)) rank are performing work similar to that of the DO in the Fire Stream and on this basis, the pay of S(Amb) should be raised to that of the next higher rank, namely Assistant Chief Ambulance Officer (ACAO). Similarly, there are views that the span of control, responsibilities and nature of work of the ACAO rank are comparable to that of an Senior Divisional Officer (SDO) and its pay should be raised to that of the Senior Assistant Chief Ambulance Officer (SACAO). This would in effect result in the abolition of the rank of SACAO and upgrading of all the ranks below.

6.34 Having reviewed the case, we consider the current command structure appropriate. We also see the merit of continuing the present practice of broadbanding the Officer ranks except the entry ranks in terms of pay and rank structure. As the issue is essentially related to ranking, we encourage the management to review whether there is any case to adjust the ranking of certain posts in the AO grade where functionally justified.

***Mobilising and Communications Stream***

6.35 It has been represented to us that the increasing number of calls for fire and ambulance services has heightened the work pressure of the SFn(C), resulting in higher staff turnover. To tackle the problem, we recommend that one incremental jump be granted to SFn(C) on completion of five years of service and obtaining the necessary qualification for promotion to PFn(C) (**Recommendation 6.10**).

6.36 To recognise the enhanced job factors and retain experience, we recommend that the minimum and maximum pay points of the SFn(C) rank be raised by one pay point each. We also note that a PFn(C) plays the role of Leading Console Operator, and is required to make instant decisions to despatch fire appliances/ambulances and resources according to departmental procedures and instructions. For those posted to the Airport Fire Contingent, they have to be trained on special skills and knowledge on airport and aircraft related matters. Both the management and staff have requested the creation of an additional rank above the PFn(C) to take charge of these duties and improve promotion prospects. We see no functional justifications to support the proposal. To recognise the enhanced responsibilities, we recommend raising the maximum pay of the PFn(C) by two points and increasing the minimum pay by one point. The proposed new pay scales of the Fn grade in the MC Stream are as follows (**Recommendation 6.11**) –

Rank	Existing Pay Scale	Recommended Pay Scale
Senior Fireman (Control)	GDS(R) 14-22	GDS(R) 15 -23
Principal Fireman (Control)	GDS(R) 23-27	GDS(R) 24-29

6.37 In line with the principle of meritocracy, we recommend that the modified through scale arrangement proposed for the StnO



and SStnO ranks be similarly applied to the through scale between the StnO(C) and SStnO(C) ranks, as set out in paragraph 6.22. **(Recommendation 6.12)**

6.38 Taking into account the enhanced job factors and increased responsibilities of the StnO and SStnO engaged in mobilising and communications work, we recommend enhancing the pay scales of the ranks as follows **(Recommendation 6.13)** –

Rank	Existing Pay Scale	Recommended Pay Scale
Station Officer (Control)	GDS(O) 5-25	GDS(O) 5 –21 <sup>#</sup> ( <sup>#</sup> through scale modified)
Senior Station Officer (Control)	GDS(O) 21-25	GDS(O) 22-26

6.39 The Fire Services staff also propose the creation of a new rank of Assistant Divisional Officer (Control) (ADO(C)) in the MC Stream. At present, the MC Stream is headed by an SDO, underpinned by one DO and four Assistant Divisional Officers, all from the Fire Stream. We have discussed the proposal with the management and are advised that there are reservations about the proposal.

***The Directorate***

6.40 We have received proposals from the management and staff for the creation of two additional Deputy Director (DD) posts, one each for the Fire and Ambulance Streams to meet operational needs and strengthen the directorate structure. The management suggests pitching the rank of the DD for the Fire Stream at a new level between GDS(C) 3 and GDS(C) 4 and the one for the Ambulance Stream at GDS(C) 3.

6.41 The suggestion of pitching the proposed DD post at a level between GDS(C) 3 and GDS(C) 4 involves creation of a new directorate rank. We have examined the proposal, but do not see strong functional justifications for the creation of a new DD rank. We recommend maintaining the current directorate grade structure **(Recommendation 6.14)**. That said, we note that the FSD has a total establishment of 8 720 disciplined services posts and is the third largest department in the Government. There might be a case to

consider an additional DD post at GDS(C) 3 level. The management could review its directorate structure and pursue the matter under the existing mechanism if there are strong functional justifications.

6.42 The management and staff also propose creating additional directorate posts at the GDS(C) 1 level to enhance the Department's capabilities for overseeing policy and managing human resources and operational matters. As these proposals can be pursued under the existing mechanism, we recommend the management to review its directorate complement and seek formal creation of additional posts where functionally justified.

6.43 We will set out our recommendations on the directorate pay scales in Chapter 11 (paragraph 11.10).

### ***Conditioned Hours of Work***

6.44 The management proposes that the Administration should formally recognise the long conditioned hours of work of staff of various Streams in FSD and that such should be adequately reflected in their pay. They consider that the conditioned hours of work should be reduced in the long run. There are also requests from different Streams, some asking for reduction of conditioned hours while a few support extending their hours of work to 54 per week on condition that their pay be correspondingly adjusted upward.

6.45 As mentioned in Chapter 3 (paragraphs 3.44 to 3.47), the conditioned hours of the Disciplined Services are governed by operational needs and are determined in relation to the total responsibilities of each Service, its complement, and the actual manpower situation at any time. Partly due to its unique shift pattern and nature of work, the Fire Stream has the longest conditioned hours. The conditioned hours of the Fn grade of the Fire Stream were reduced from 60 to 54 hours per week upon the advice of the Standing Committee and a new 12-hour shift system came into operation with effect from August 1990. Subsequently, it was reverted to a 24-hour shift system (24 hours on, 48 hours off) in April 1992. The same is applied to the StnO/DO grade in the Fire Stream. In the Ambulance Stream, the conditioned hours for the Rank and File and Officer grades are 48 and 44 hours per week respectively while those for the MC Stream are 48 or 54 hours per week depending on their posting.

6.46 The Fire Stream has the longest working hours of 54 hours per week. We are open to proposals to reduce the conditioned hours of the staff working in the Fire Stream subject to the fulfilment of the three pre-requisites: cost neutrality, no additional staffing requirement and no reduction of service to the community. We appreciate the intensity of efforts required of the Fire Stream during operations. Nonetheless, we also note that their work is broadly reactive in nature and the working hours involve standby time and rest time. Furthermore, the unique shift pattern of “24 hours on, 48 hours off” also has the incidental benefits of incurring less travelling time and cost, reducing the total number of working days and in turn, enabling over 98% of the FSD staff to enjoy five-day week, which is one of the highest ratios among the Disciplined Services. That said, we have explored with the management the feasibility of reducing the conditioned hours of the Fire Stream. However, the management advised that the Department has difficulties in meeting the three pre-requisites at this juncture. We urge the Department to explore further with the staff and the Administration on the feasibility of reducing the conditioned hours of staff in the Fire Stream under the three pre-requisites, using an incremental approach and starting with a pilot scheme where appropriate. (**Recommendation 6.15**)

### ***Job-Related Allowances***

#### **Special Allowance for Paramedic Ambulance Supervisors (Paramedic Allowance)**

6.47 Currently, the majority of the SAmbn and PAmbn are EMA II qualified and are drawing the Paramedic Allowance in recognition of the qualification and performance of paramedic duties at EMA II level. They need to undergo re-certification of their paramedic proficiency at EMA II level every three years.

6.48 The Paramedic Allowance was first introduced in 1995 as a temporary allowance at the rate of \$600 (or equivalent to 6.2% of the then GDS(R) 1). In 1998, having considered the Administration’s proposal, the Standing Committee endorsed an increase of the rate to 10% of GDS(R) 1 on the understanding that the higher rate would cover any future upgrading of skills at the EMA II paramedic supervisor level. In making this recommendation, the

Standing Committee made the observation that the grant of the allowance should be regarded as a transitional arrangement.

6.49 In the context of the GSR, we have reviewed the continuation of the Paramedic Allowance in the light of latest developments. In principle, as the paramedic duties have gradually become a key component of the core duties of the SAmbn and PAmbn ranks, the pay should be adjusted where appropriate to reflect this function. In this connection, we have proposed in paragraph 6.28 to increase the minimum and maximum pay points of the SAmbn by one point each, and to increase the minimum pay of PAmbn by one point and its maximum pay by two points. The pay increase reflects the enhanced responsibilities of the two ranks arising from changes since the last reviews including the transformation of ambulance aid to paramedic services.

6.50 We appreciate that the paramedic ambulance service has contributed significantly to the community by providing pre-hospital care to the sick and injured and note that the Paramedic Allowance has served a useful purpose in promoting paramedic ambulance service in Hong Kong. The allowance has been in place for some time, and more than 75% of the staff in the ranks of SAmbn and PAmbn are drawing the allowance. With the proposed improved pay scales of these two ranks, the allowance may no longer be required. However, having regard to the fact that the EMA II qualification is subject to re-certification at a three-year interval, we recommend continuing to grant the allowance for the time being pending further review by the management on an appropriate continuous professional development framework with a robust accreditation to sustain and enhance the quality of paramedic ambulance service in Hong Kong, having regard to the interface of various providers of pre-hospital care and other paramedic services in Hong Kong. (**Recommendation 6.16**)

#### Proposed New Allowances

6.51 The management proposes granting two special allowances for the Fn grade. One is intended for members of Fn grade who have acquired FR qualifications and are required to perform such duties in addition to their normal duties. The other is to recognise the extra skills and additional responsibilities shouldered by the Fn grade for performing SRS duties.

6.52 The FR programme was introduced in 2003 where the Fn grade members are trained to provide prompt basic life support services for casualties/patients with conditions such as cardiac diseases, airway obstruction by foreign body and other life threatening conditions before arriving the hospitals. The management considers that the FR duty is not normally expected of the Fn grade, and as a result of the implementation of the programme, the workload of the members of the Fn grade has increased.

6.53 The SRS was set up in April 2000 with a view to providing a specially trained rescue team equipped with advanced rescue tools for enhancing the operational response to disastrous incidents, such as landslides and incidents with multi-casualties, that happen within or outside the Hong Kong territory. To be qualified, Fn grade members must have passed all the assessments on the various training modules, and their qualification is subject to re-certification at three-year intervals.

6.54 On top of the FR and SRS training, we note that the Department is stepping up efforts to equip the operational staff with advanced and specialist training to better fortify them in serving the community. We are of the view that there is a prima facie case for introducing a new allowance to recognise the special competence, specialist training, extra duties, coupled with the exceptional danger, risk and hardship associated with certain higher level responsibilities of the Fn grade evolved over the years. Such competencies should be developed, certified and formalised having regard to best practices in other leading fire brigades. The allowance should preferably be of two tiers, with the rate of Level 1 not exceeding 5% of GDS(R) 1 and the rate of Level 2 at around 7.5% of GDS(R) 1, payable to the Fn rank and SFn/PFn ranks in the Fire Stream respectively. The new allowance should cover a wide array of new duties and skills including aspects such as Compartment Fire Behaviour, Advanced Live Fire, Advanced Breathing Apparatus Search and Conduit Rescue, Advanced Ambulance Aid for Level 1, and SRS for Level 2. Where justified, the Standing Committee is open to suggestions to consider setting the rate for Level 2 at no more than 10% of GDS(R) 1. Similar to other Job-related Allowances, the new allowance should be based on attainment of the prescribed proficiency level and actual performance of related duties. Other guiding principles on the granting of Job-related Allowances should also apply. We encourage

the management to explore further with the Administration and the staff on details of the proposal. We will consider it when a detailed proposal is received. (**Recommendation 6.17**)

### ***Other Issues***

6.55 As mentioned in Chapter 1, pay cannot and should not be the only tool to maintain an efficient and effective service. In the case of the FSD, we are aware of the diverse, complex and risky operations, and the escalating demand for pre-hospital care. The hard work and strong commitment of the staff deserve our recognition. We appreciate the staff's requests for additional resources in terms of ambulances, protective gear, advance rescue apparatus and equipment. We also note the requests for training reserve, staff and adjustments to deployment practices. We understand that these requests are receiving close attention. The provision of additional resources will go a long way to addressing the morale and concern of the Ambulance Stream. It is imperative that our frontline officers are given reasonable support in terms of staffing and equipment in discharging their duties. We trust the management, in consultation with relevant bureaux, will examine these issues and pursue relevant proposals under the existing mechanism, where appropriate.

### **Summary of Key Recommendations**

6.56 In summary –

- (a) we recommend enhancing the pay scales of the non-directorate ranks of the FSD as detailed in **Appendix 14**;
- (b) we urge the Department to explore further with the staff and the Administration on the feasibility of reducing the conditioned hours of staff working in the Fire Stream under the three pre-requisites;
- (c) we recommend continuing the Paramedic Allowance for the time being, pending further review by the management on an appropriate continuous professional development framework with a robust accreditation system, having regard to the interface

of various providers of pre-hospital care and other paramedic services in Hong Kong; and

- (d) we consider there is a prima facie case for introducing a new two-tier allowance for the Fn grade. We encourage the Department to explore further with the Administration and the staff on details of the proposal.

