

FSD responds to Coroner's verdict

The Coroner's Court today (May 10) returned the verdict on the cause of death of two Fire Services Department (FSD) personnel during the fire-fighting operation of a No. 4 fire at Amoycan Industrial Centre (AIC) in June 2016. The FSD conveys its deepest condolences again to the family members of the brave deceased who lost their lives in the course of duty. The department will thoroughly study the recommendations in the verdict to prevent the recurrence of such tragedies.

Immediately after the fire at AIC, the FSD established an Interdepartmental Fire Investigation Task Force to conduct an in-depth investigation into various aspects of the fire, including the cause of the fire, circumstances leading to the fatalities and injuries of staff members, and the usage and mode of operation of industrial buildings.

The Task Force subsequently made a number of recommendations to the department, covering various aspects including occupational safety and health (OSH), operational procedures, equipment and tools, and public education on fire safety. The department has implemented a series of improvement measures with a view to enhancing the safety and operational efficiency of frontline personnel. These measures include:

(1) On the operational front, the department has enhanced the operational procedures of breathing apparatus (BA), and established the Breathing Apparatus Support Team to provide logistical support in relation to BA operation at incidents. It has also introduced new BA ancillary equipment, such as the Firefighter Locator System and retractable BA personal lines, to facilitate rescue operations;

(2) On OSH, the FSD has implemented measures including improving the arrangement for rest areas at incidents, devising guidelines for members' reference on the frontline work and rest schedules under hot or inclement weather, stepping up members' training in respect of their awareness on heat-related illnesses and relevant preventive measures, and issuing Safety Alert Prevention of Heat Stroke and relevant reminders upon the issuance of the Very Hot Weather Warning signal;

(3) On public education on fire safety, the FSD established the Community Emergency Preparedness Division in 2018 to strengthen its promotion in the community the response capability in respect of emergency preparedness through educational and promotional activities.

In respect of fire safety in mini-storage premises, the FSD has been working closely with relevant departments to conduct inspections and take enforcement action in mini-storage premises throughout the territory since June 2016 to improve their safety level. As at April 30, the department had inspected 1,222 mini-storage premises and found a total of 3,222 common fire hazards in 959 target mini-storage premises. The department issued Fire Hazard Abatement Notices (FHANs) to the operators concerned to require them

to abate the fire hazards within specified periods of time. The department has also instigated prosecutions against 221 operators who failed to comply with FHANs.

On the other hand, the fire incident increased public concern over the fire safety in old industrial buildings, in particular those without the provision of an automatic sprinkler system. To upgrade the fire safety standards of old industrial buildings, the Fire Safety (Industrial Buildings) Ordinance was implemented on June 19, 2020. The Ordinance mandates that owners and occupiers of pre-1987 industrial buildings upgrade the provision of fire service installations and equipment and fire safety construction, as per the instructions of the Directors of the FSD and the Buildings Department. The fire safety standards of all premises inside the old industrial buildings, including mini-storage premises, are subject to the Ordinance and have to comply with the direction to carry out fire safety improvement works.

The FSD will continue to strive to enhance staff members' safety and operational efficiency in incidents, strengthen public awareness on fire safety and improve the fire safety in mini-storage premises and old industrial buildings, in order to fulfil the prime mission of "Serving with courage, passion and commitment".