

LM to SBCR 2/581/85 Pt. 28
CB1/PL/PS

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13 February 2004

Clerk to Panel on Public Service
Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road
Central
Hong Kong
(Attn : Ms Rosalind MA)

Dear Ms Ma,

Recruitment of Ambulancemen

Thank you for your letter of 28 January 2004 enclosing the letter from the Chairman, Ambulancemen's Union on the recruitment of ambulancemen by the Fire Services Department (FSD). As requested, I provide the Administration's response as follows.

In the light of the fiscal condition of the Government and in order to reduce the civil service establishment to around 160,000 by 2006-07, the Government has imposed a general civil service recruitment freeze from 1 April 2003. In recognition of the operational needs of the FSD, exemption from the general recruitment freeze was granted to the Department to proceed with open recruitment to fill 70 posts. Having carefully examined the overall manpower requirements of the Department, FSD has decided to fill 28 Ambulanceman, 27 Fireman and 15 Station Officer posts. The recruitment exercise is now in progress and is expected to be completed in June 2004.

It is noted that in 2003, 93.2% of emergency ambulance calls were handled within the target response time of 12 minutes, representing an improvement of 1.4% as compared with that of 2002, and exceeding the target of 92.5% in the performance pledge. The general improvement in the response time performance of FSD in 2003 was attributable to a number of factors, including the drop in emergency ambulance calls during the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome outbreak in the second quarter, the levy of fees for the use of the Accident & Emergency service, as well as the result of introducing a number of improvement measures (such as the staggered shift system and the Urgent Care Fleet) by the management to deploy ambulance resources in a more flexible and effective manner.

FSD is fully aware of the pressure and heavy workload faced by frontline ambulance staff, which have been brought about by various new projects as well as rising public expectation for better services. In this regard, the Department will continue to monitor closely the manpower requirement and service needs of the Emergency Ambulance Service and explore ways to optimize the deployment of resources to meet future challenges. In the process, FSD will enhance communication with the staff side, including the Ambulancemen's Union.

(Charles WONG)
for Secretary for Security

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