

FSD introduces new system for provision of post-dispatch advice to enhance emergency ambulance service

To further enhance the emergency ambulance service (EAS), the Fire Services Department (FSD) started a full-scale trial run of a new computer system for the provision of post-dispatch advice (PDA) today (September 27) to assist personnel of the Fire Services Communications Centre (FSCC) in, after dispatching ambulances, providing callers with immediate, comprehensive and appropriate advice on more than 30 types of injuries and sicknesses. The service will be launched on October 4.

Through providing timely and appropriate first-aid advice, the PDA system enables the callers to stabilise patients' conditions before the arrival of an ambulance crew, and helps reduce the risk of inadvertent mishandling of patients, as well as alleviating the anxiety and distress of both the patients and the callers.

Since May 2011, the FSD has been gradually offering PDA to callers in respect of six common types of injuries and sicknesses, namely bleeding, burns, fracture/dislocation of limbs, convulsion, heat exposure and hypothermia. The new system brings the number to more than 30, covering, among others, physical trauma, loss of consciousness and cardiac arrest. PDA is simple and easy to follow. Also, the computer system will automatically send the patient information to the responding ambulance or fire appliance to enable the responding crew to make better preparation before arrival at the scene. In contrast to the case without PDA, the callers can help to stabilise the patients' conditions before the arrival of an ambulance. Receiving immediate advice is of paramount importance, especially for those in critical condition.

PDA is an added-value service. The callers for ambulance service are not required to prepare any additional information and initiate a request for the service. The target response time for EAS calls will remain unchanged, i.e. 92.5 per cent of EAS calls can be handled within 12 minutes.

The spokesman for the FSD said that, with the aid of the computer system, the dispatch of ambulances and the provision of advice are handled by separate personnel to ensure no delay in rescue. To ensure the quality of the PDA service, the FSCC personnel are required to receive dedicated training and hold valid Emergency Medical Dispatcher Certificates before they are authorised to provide the service.

The protocols incorporated in the computer system were developed by the International Academies of Emergency Dispatch and have been in wide application. At present, similar computer systems and corresponding protocols have been adopted by some 3 000 mobilising centres of emergency services in

more than 40 regions, including the Mainland, the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Germany, Australia, New Zealand and Malaysia.