

**Independent Committee in relation to the
Fire at Wang Fuk Court in Tai Po**

Witness Statement of WONG Sze-lut, Sunny

I, WONG Sze-lut, Sunny, of Operational Support and Professional Development Command, Fire Services Department, Fire Services Headquarters Building, 1 Hong Chong Road, Tsim Sha Tsui East, Kowloon do say as follows:-

1. I am the Deputy Chief Fire Officer (Operational Support and Professional Development) of the Fire Services Department (“FSD”) of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. I have joined the FSD for 23 years and 4 months since about 26 August 2002 and was promoted to the present rank on 31 December 2024. My main responsibility is to oversee the operation of the occupational safety and health, Fire Services Communications Centre (“FSCC”), the Fire and Ambulance Services Academy, issues relating to recruitment, training and examination, workshop & transport matters and to provide operational support to Fire Operational Commands and Ambulance Command.

2. I make this Witness Statement pursuant to the request of the Independent Committee (“Committee”) in relation to the fire at Wang Fuk Court in Tai Po as set out in a letter from Messrs. Lo & Lo, Solicitors for the Committee, to the FSD dated 23 December 2025 (“23 December Letter”) in which specific questions were raised in paragraphs 2 to 3, 5 to 9, and 12 to 20 (“Questions”). Save where otherwise appears, the facts deposed hereto are within my personal knowledge or are derived from office files and records and sources to which I have access and are true to the best of my knowledge,

information and belief. Save as otherwise specified, this Witness Statement adopts the same abbreviations and nomenclature as in the 23 December Letter.

3. This Witness Statement addresses Questions 7, 8, 9, 19.6 and 19.7 of the 23 December Letter. Other Questions which are within FSD's purview will be addressed in the witness statements of other relevant officers of the FSD to the Committee. I understand that the FSD will produce to the Committee a List of Documents ("LoD"), a draft of which I have read, indexing all relevant documents in FSD's possession. In this Witness Statement, I shall refer to these documents by their designation in the LoD (for example, [FSD/A(I)/1] means Item 1 in Part A(I) of the LoD) without annexing them hereto for the avoidance of duplication.

4. This Witness Statement is divided into the following parts:-
 - (i) **Part A** addresses **Question 7** by explaining the FSD's standard strategies and protocol for casualty search and recovery, provides a summary of casualty locations with accompanying diagrams for **Question 8**, and responds to **Question 9** regarding the corresponding autopsy reports obtained from the Department of Health ("DH");
 - (ii) **Part B** provides an explanation of the decision not to deploy fire-fighting drones and higher-reaching aerial appliances of up to 100m in height for fire suppression, as well as helicopters for water bombing, in answer to **Question 19.6**;
 - (iii) **Part C** explains FSD's decision not to request manpower support from the Chinese Mainland, in answer to **Question 19.7**; and
 - (iv) **Part D** addresses potential queries regarding whether the FSD could have prioritized the dismantling of the

burning scaffolding still attached to the buildings.

Part A - FSD's Standard Strategies and Protocols in Locating, Retrieving and Identifying Casualties

5. In response to **Question 7**, the following provides a detailed account of FSD's approach in normal fire incidents. The standard strategies and protocols for locating, retrieving and identifying casualties are structured into three principal components: Management of Assistance Requests from the Public, Search and Rescue ("SAR") Operations at Fire Scenes, and Casualty Identification and Handover Procedures. The standard strategies and protocols are governed by various FSD departmental orders, guidelines, and manuals in [FSD/G(I)] to which I will refer in my explanation below.

5.1 *Management of Assistance Requests from the Public and Mobilisation of SAR Teams*

5.1.1 The standard strategies and protocols for locating casualties commence when console operators of the FSCC receive assistance requests from the public.

5.1.2 *Mobilisation and Composition of SAR Teams*

[FSD/G(I)/3]
Supplementary
Note (9)
(A.S. No. 211/25)

5.1.2.1 Generally, a SAR Team will be automatically dispatched when a building fire is reported by two or more callers. Each SAR Team comprises one pumping appliance (either a Hydraulic Platform or Major Pump) and one rescue appliance (either a Major Rescue Unit or Light Rescue Unit). One Reserve Heavy Pump equipped with a Positive Pressure Ventilation Blower and one ambulance will also be dispatched with the first SAR Team.

[FSD/G(I)/12]
p.5
(A.S. No. 351/7)

5.1.3 Standard Procedure for Receiving Assistance Requests

- 5.1.3.1 Upon receiving an assistance request, console operators collect essential information from the caller, including the location of persons requiring assistance, the number of persons along with their gender and age, and a contact phone number. All assistance requests are recorded in the Computer Mobilizing System and relayed to the SAR Team Leader (Rescue Officer) immediately. If the caller has doubts about evacuation, appropriate safety advice will be provided.

[FSD/G(I)/15]
pp. 7-8
(A.S. No.
419/10 & 11)

5.1.4 Procedures Upon Receiving more than Four Assistance Requests

- 5.1.4.1 When receiving the 4th assistance request, the FSCC dispatches an additional SAR Team comprising two fire appliances, as well as one Mobile Command Unit (“MCU”), to attend the incident. An additional talk group is exclusively allocated for SAR operations.

[FSD/G(I)/2]
pp. 7-8
(A.S. No.
237/7 & 8)

- 5.1.4.2 When two SAR Teams are attending the same incident, the Information Dissemination Mechanism and the Callback Mechanism are then activated. These two mechanisms will be elaborated below.

5.1.5 Information Dissemination Mechanism

- 5.1.5.1 Essential information from assistance requests will be disseminated to the Incident Commander, SAR Team Leader (Rescue Officer) and Officer-in-charge of the MCU via FSD Messenger, the Department's internal instant messaging application.

5.1.5.2 The FSCC creates a chat group in FSD Messenger, named “FS Assistance”, with the incident number and adds all officers concerned, including the SAR Team Leader (Rescue Officer) and Officer-in-charge of the MCU. The details of each assistance request are disseminated through this group, with receipt confirmed via radio or telephone.

5.1.5.3 In return, relevant updates on each request, including acknowledgement status, assignment details, and task completion, are recorded by the FSCC, with support from the MCU at the fire scene.

5.1.6 Callback Mechanism

5.1.6.1 The Callback Mechanism is established to update the situation of persons seeking assistance and to provide those persons with safety guidance. The SAR Team Leader (Rescue Officer) will be informed of any updates for his adjustments to SAR priorities.

5.2 ***General Procedural Guidelines and Operational Tactics of SAR***

5.2.1 The main tasks of the SAR Team include conducting search and rescue in reported units while searching staircases and common areas. These operations are executed through three sequential stages: first, immediate roof access and prioritised unit rescue; second, systematic searches of target floors surrounding the fire; and third, a thorough sweep of all remaining areas, including upper floors and basements. Despite the above, the Incident Commander retains flexibility to repeat or adjust stages as required.

[FSD/G(I)/12]
Annex 3, p. 18
(A.S. No. 351/20)

5.2.2 During search operations, when handling multiple assistance requests, manpower will be deployed systematically to handle nearby requests in one batch. Forced entry will be conducted into units where occupants are at risk, and evacuation decisions are made based on prevailing conditions.

5.3 ***Casualty Identification and Handover Procedures***

[FSD/G(I)/15]
p. 27
(A.S. No. 419/30)

5.3.1 Casualties rescued by firefighters will be handed over to ambulance staff at the scene for further assessment. To ensure accurate documentation, the Patient Tagging System for Multiple Casualties Incidents (“PTS-MCI”)¹ is employed. The system enables ambulance personnel to consolidate information on casualties and fatalities at the scene, thereby facilitating effective allocation of ambulance resources.

5.3.2 The accident and emergency departments of hospitals are also able to access the latest casualty figures and the conditions of casualties recorded through the system, allowing them to make advance preparations for receiving patients. Ambulance personnel will be directed to use the PTS-MCI, including its recording function, to capture information provided by firefighters, such as casualty location and the appliance team involved.

6. For **Question 8**, two summaries of fatalities and injuries, presented in the form of Schedules with accompanying diagrams and location plans, are attached. The information contained in the Schedules is based on data provided by the

[FSD/D(III)/2]

[FSD/D(III)/3]

¹ The FSD has adopted the “Patient Tagging System for Multiple Casualties Incidents (“PTS-MCI”) to electronically process casualty information in major incidents, enabling FSD personnel and other relevant parties involved in rescue operations to obtain real-time information on the casualties at incident scenes.

Hong Kong Police Force (“HKPF”) and records from the FSD's PTS-MCI as at 3 January 2026. The final version has yet to be completed, pending the outcome of the HKPF's investigation.

7. In response to **Question 9**, the FSD has obtained 117 autopsy reports from DH as at 22 December 2025, with additional reports expected to be provided in due course. At this stage, the FSD is not in possession of any medical reports of the injured. [FSD/D(III)/1]

Part B - Explanation of the Decision Not to Deploy Fire-fighting Drones and Higher-reaching Aerial Appliances of up to 100m in Height for Fire Suppression, as well as Helicopters for Water Bombing

8. In response to **Question 19.6**, the suggestion that firefighting operations were hindered because the FSD’s equipment could not reach the upper floors of the buildings concerned is unfounded. In my explanation below, references will be made to the applicable FSD departmental orders, guidelines, and manuals, codes of practices issued by various government departments, as well as other relevant sources of information.

8.1 ***Internal and External Tactics for Fire-fighting***

[FSD/G(I)/15]
para. 3.1.2.4(i),
p. 8,
(A.S. No. 419/11)

- 8.1.1 Internal firefighting is the primary and most effective tactic for extinguishing fires in high-rise buildings. Due to the height, enclosure, and structural complexity of tall buildings, external water streams lack the accuracy, penetration, and cooling effect required to reach the fire floor effectively. Instead, suppression depends on firefighters advancing hoselines internally. This approach is critical for suppressing fires at

their origin and rescuing trapped occupants. Internal firefighting enables firefighters to locate and extract trapped persons swiftly, a capability that external attacks cannot achieve, thereby fulfilling the core mission of life saving despite the inherent risks involved.

- 8.1.2 In building fires, internal firefighting tactics are typically adopted, with external water monitors employed in the manner of a water curtain or sprinkler to forestall fire spread rather than to directly suppress the fire. Without the instruction or permission of the officer-in-charge, no external water monitor jet should be applied directly to units at the scene. This protocol is critical due to the serious danger posed to life therein by introducing a large volume of water into a superheated, ventilation-limited space. [FSD/G(I)/9] para. 2.7.12 (viii), p. 21 (A.S. No. 362/21) [FSD/G(III)/2]
- 8.1.3 Such an action would result in the rapid vaporisation of water, producing an immense quantity of steam. Given that water expands approximately 1,700 times in volume when converted to steam, the resulting pressurised hot gases would be forcibly expelled, driving extreme heat and steam into adjacent unaffected compartments and even building common areas, including escape routes. The consequences would be severe and immediate: a rapid, lethal rise in ambient temperature combined with a complete loss of visibility due to dense steam. This would critically endanger any individual awaiting rescue within the affected units or areas and also pose a grave risk to firefighters conducting interior firefighting and rescue operations. [FSD/G(III)/4] [FSD/G(III)/3]
- 8.2 ***Aerial Ladder Capability and Road-Width Requirements*** [FSD/G(I)/9] pp. 2-6 (A.S. No. 362/2-6)
- 8.2.1 The highest-reaching aerial appliances currently operated by

the FSD are 56-metre turntable ladders which are approximately 17-storey high. However, the operational height of an aerial ladder is not the sole factor in determining its effectiveness, as safe deployment requires the use of outriggers on both sides of the appliance, and the ground footprint required for operation increases proportionally with ladder height. In Hong Kong, the design and construction of Emergency Vehicular Access (“EVA”) are stipulated in the Code of Practice for Fire Safety in Buildings 2011. The width of an EVA should be not less than 6 metres and must allow safe and unobstructed access as well as safe operation of a fire appliance having a turning circle of 26 metres and a length of 12 metres. Even if the FSD were equipped with a higher-reaching aerial appliance, such as the 100-metre aerial ladder platform mentioned in **Question 19.6**, it would require a design access width of approximately 10 metres for aerial operation, rendering such an appliance impractical for operation on EVAs throughout the territory.

[FSD/A(II)/3]
pp. 120-123

8.3 ***Load-Bearing Constraints of Higher-Reaching Aerial Ladder***

[FSD/G(I)/9]
para. 1.2.2(iv),
p. 3
(A.S. No.362/3)

8.3.1 In addition to the abovementioned requirement, EVA must also allow safe operation of a fire appliance having a gross weight of 30 tonnes. A 100-metre aerial ladder platform typically weighs more than 60 tonnes which substantially exceed 30 tonnes. Even though there is a proposal to remove pedestrian railings to create additional operating space, it fails to account for the technical constraints of actual operations. The load-bearing capacity of road surfaces would remain inadequate, as pedestrian roads are generally designed to have a lower load-bearing capacity. Under these conditions, the safe

[FSD/A(II)/3]
pp. 120-123

deployment and operation of such appliance could not be assured.

8.3.2 Notwithstanding the aforementioned safety considerations, the sole viable location within the operational vicinity of Wang Fuk Court for deploying a 100-metre aerial ladder platform would be at Tai Po Road (Yuen Chau Tsai), which is approximately 46 metres away from Wang Sun House. At this standoff distance, the rescue cage of the platform would be incapable of reaching the building façade to effect an aerial rescue. Furthermore, aerial water jets operating from this range would face significant operational constraints: wind deflection would reduce both targeting accuracy and effective reach, while the deployment location would restrict water coverage to a single building façade. Therefore, deploying a 100-metre aerial ladder platform offers no operational advantage over the turntable ladders already at the scene.

8.3.3 As the Buildings Department holds jurisdiction over EVA standards, the FSD will coordinate with them and relevant stakeholders to study the feasibility of expanding the EVA width and increasing the EVA load-bearing capacity, etc. to accommodate higher-reaching aerial appliances. However, experience from the Chinese Mainland indicates that the deployment of such appliances is predetermined in newly developed areas, where road and access infrastructure can be designed from the outset to support the larger ground footprint of these specialized vehicles.

8.4 ***Stability and Operational Safety Considerations of Higher-Reaching Aerial Ladder***

8.4.1 While a 100-metre aerial ladder could technically reach the

[FSD/G(I)/9]
paras. 2.7.9 &
2.10.1.1-2,
pp. 20 & 25
(A.S. No.
362/20 & 25)

required height, its operation would remain subject to wind forces, loading constraints, and the thrust generated by water discharge. These factors would significantly impact stability and further restrict safe and effective use of the appliance in actual firefighting conditions.

8.5 *Technical Immaturity of Firefighting Drones*

[FSD/G(II)/8]

8.5.1 With respect to firefighting drones, the FSD notes that drone-based firefighting technology currently being explored by Chinese Mainland fire departments remains at an experimental stage and has not yet reached a level of technical maturity suitable for application in real incidents. At present, operations of such systems in fire scene are subject to significant operational limitations.

8.5.2 According to information from the National Fire and Rescue Administration (“NFRA”), the supreme national authority for fire and rescue services in the Chinese Mainland, operating under the Ministry of Emergency Management of the People's Republic of China and responsible for setting national policies and standards and directing the country's comprehensive fire and rescue forces, no firefighting drones are currently in operational use by Chinese Mainland fire departments, and using drones for firefighting is still at the research and development stage. Written confirmation is pending from the NFRA. The application of drones in firefighting, particularly in high-rise buildings, remains a novel and developing concept. Based on available information, there are currently no known fire departments that have utilized drones for direct fire suppression in actual fire incidents. The feasibility of this approach is still subject to experimentation and assessment.

8.6 ***Payload and Firefighting Effectiveness Limitations of Firefighting Drones*** [FSD/G(II)/8]

8.6.1 Firefighting drones are inherently constrained by carrying capacity. In addition to the weight of the drone itself, any firefighting operation would require the drone to carry or be connected to a water source and delivery hose, which substantially increases the load and adversely affects flight stability. Moreover, the diameter of water delivery hoses used by drones is significantly smaller than that of conventional fire hoses, resulting in limited water flow and pressure. These limits their effectiveness in suppressing large-scale or high-intensity fires.

8.7 ***Operational and Environmental Constraints of Firefighting Drones*** [FSD/G(II)/8]

8.7.1 Deploying drones to play a supporting role in firefighting presents considerable technical challenges. In high-temperature environments, intense heat can degrade battery performance and damage sensitive electronic components, significantly reducing operational endurance. Smoke-filled conditions further compound these difficulties, as particulate matter and reduced visibility impair drone sensors, compromising navigation accuracy and obstacle detection. These factors increase the risk of malfunction or collision, raising serious safety concerns for both firefighters and the public.

8.7.2 Notwithstanding the above limitations, the FSD is consistently conducting research on new firefighting and rescue techniques and exploring emerging technologies and equipment to keep pace with societal changes. The FSD will continue actively

embracing the appropriate use of technology to enhance operational effectiveness.

8.8 *Previous Research on Drone Application in Operations* [FSD/G(II)/8]

8.8.1 The FSD commenced drone trials as early as 2017. In 2019, a delegation visited the China Fire and Rescue Institute to study the latest developments in drone deployment, including applications in firefighting and rescue scenarios. Since then, the FSD has continued to research and monitor advancements in drone technology through various channels: extensive operational use in rescue operations beginning in 2022; regular exchanges and visits with counterparts in the Chinese Mainland; meetings with drone manufacturers to examine proposals for rescue and firefighting applications; and participation in large-scale drone and rescue exhibitions.

8.8.2 Regarding the direct use of drones in firefighting, such applications remain operationally immature as stated above. Accordingly, the FSD continues to monitor these developments closely while evaluating their potential for safe and effective adoption in Hong Kong.

8.9 *Operational Use of Drones During the Incident* [FSD/G(II)/8]

8.9.1 The FSD's Unmanned Aircraft System (“UAS”) team deployed ten drones equipped with live-streaming and thermal imaging capabilities to analyse the fire situation and provide supplementary high-altitude illumination during nighttime operations. These assets played a crucial role in this large-scale incident. For instance, drones were used to observe the condition of two persons trapped on a building rooftop during the fire at Wang Fuk Court. When conditions permitted,

firefighting personnel traversed the scene to reach the rooftop and successfully rescued both individuals. During the later stages, the UAS team also utilised drones to monitor for reignition caused by extremely high residual temperatures, enabling the immediate deployment of resources to address any flare-ups.

- 8.9.2 To further augment aerial surveillance capacity, the FSD borrowed ten additional drones equipped with optical and thermal imaging devices from the Fire and Rescue Corps of Guangdong Province. These supplementary assets enhanced situational awareness throughout the operation.

9. *Ongoing Review of Technological Developments*

- 9.1 The FSD maintains continuous engagement with international counterparts and relevant industry partners to monitor technological developments in firefighting and rescue operations. In parallel, ongoing research is being undertaken to evaluate the feasibility and operational applicability of ultra-high aerial rescue vehicles, drone-based firefighting systems, robotic firefighting systems, and other innovative solutions in the Hong Kong context. The FSD continues to research and monitor emerging technologies through extensive operational deployment in rescue operations, regular exchanges with counterparts in Chinese Mainland, meetings with industry stakeholders, and participation in large-scale drone and rescue exhibitions.

10. The deployment of helicopters to spray water or drop water bombs would not be a safe or effective means of enhancing firefighting operations in this incident.

- 10.1 ***Limitations on Use of Helicopter in Structural Firefighting*** [FSD/G(I)/10]
para. 3, p. 3
(A.S. No. 328/6)
- 10.1.1 Fires in residential buildings normally occur within enclosed, three-dimensional structures containing a significant quantity of combustible materials. Even if water were released from a helicopter above the building, the airdropped water would not be able to penetrate into the interior of the building where the fire was located. Instead, it would largely fall on exterior façades or rooftops, and would therefore have little or no direct effect on controlling fires within residential units.
- 10.2 ***Downwash and Fire Behaviour Risks concerning Use of Helicopter*** [FSD/G(III)/1]
para. 4.38,
pp. 41 - 42
- 10.2.1 Past operational experience further indicates that helicopter downwash can create adverse and hazardous conditions. The downwash generated by a helicopter can force smoke into buildings, thereby increasing the risk to occupants who are trapped inside. It may also drive additional air into the structure, potentially intensifying the fire and increasing the risk of fire spread or reignition. In addition, turbulence generated by the aircraft may dislodge nearby debris, posing further hazards to firefighters and members of the public at ground level. [FSD/G(II)/7]
- 10.2.2 The release of water by helicopter also presents significant safety risks. A helicopter water bomb may carry a volume of water of up to one tonne. When released from height, such a volume of water can damage temporary structures such as bamboo scaffolding and wash debris to ground level, creating additional hazards. [FSD/G(II)/7]

10.3 *Impracticality of High-Altitude Release from Helicopter*

10.3.1 Suggestions that water bombs could be released from higher altitudes to mitigate downwash effects are likewise impractical. The greater the release height, the greater the dispersion of water during descent, thereby significantly reducing its firefighting effectiveness. At higher altitudes, crosswinds are also more prevalent and can deflect water away from the intended target area, further limiting operational usefulness.

Part C - Explanation of the Decision for Not Requesting Manpower Support from the Chinese Mainland

11. In response to **Question 19.7**, the suggestion that accepting additional external firefighting manpower from neighbouring cities would necessarily have resulted in faster suppression of the fire or fewer casualties is also unfounded, for the reasons set out below.

11.1 *Scene Capacity Constraints and Manpower Saturation*

11.1.1 Based on reporting from the Fire and Rescue Corps of Guangdong Province, approximately 20 fire appliances and around 100 personnel were present at Liantang Port between approximately 2200 hours and 2300 hours on 26 November 2025. It should be noted that at 2230 hours on 26 November 2025, the FSD already dispatched over 220 appliances and over 980 personnel to the scene, which exceeded around eight times the pre-determined attendance for a No. 5 Alarm Fire.

11.1.2 Owing to physical constraints within the building, including limited staircase and corridor space, as well as extreme heat conditions requiring floor-by-floor advancement, there was a

practical limit to the number of personnel who could be effectively and safely deployed at any one time. Additional manpower from neighbouring cities would not have materially accelerated firefighting or rescue operations.

11.2 *Operational Incompatibilities*

11.2.1 In considering the deployment of the Chinese Mainland firefighting personnel, it is necessary to recognize that there are significant differences between Hong Kong and the Chinese Mainland in respect of equipment standards, operational procedures, and the design of building fire protection systems. Disparities in the critical fireground procedures, such as Breathing Apparatus (“BA”) Control Procedure and Mayday Procedure, present severe risks to operational safety and effectiveness.

[FSD/G(I)/13]
paras. 1-9, 14
& 21,
pp. 1-9, 11-12,
25-40

11.2.2 The BA Control Procedure governs the deployment and monitoring of firefighters operating in hazardous atmospheres while utilising BA. The Mayday Procedure, involving emergency intervention response, serves as a lifeline for lost or trapped firefighters, relying on a strictly standardised format for communication and rescue initiation. Incompatibility in life-critical procedures during joint operations directly compromises rescue efforts, increases the likelihood of firefighter casualties, and can exacerbate the overall incident, thereby endangering both personnel and the public.

11.2.3 These procedural incompatibilities manifest in critical ways during cross-border operations. For example, the terminology for issuing a Mayday message differs fundamentally between the Chinese Mainland and Hong Kong. Hong Kong firefighters

follow local protocol by calling “Mayday, Mayday, Mayday” in English to initiate their distress signal, while Chinese Mainland firefighters use “呼救、呼救、呼救” (hūjiù, hūjiù, hūjiù) in Putonghua. This linguistic divide means that when a Chinese Mainland firefighter trapped in a collapsed structure broadcasts his distress call in Putonghua, Hong Kong personnel may not immediately recognize it as an emergency signal. In rapidly deteriorating conditions, these seconds of confusion could be fatal.

- 11.2.4 Similarly, evacuation procedures present equally dangerous incompatibilities. Hong Kong employs intermittent warning horn blasts (5 seconds on, 5 seconds off), whereas the Chinese Mainland uses continuous blasts. Chinese Mainland firefighters may not interpret Hong Kong's intermittent pattern as an evacuation order and remain in hazardous areas when immediate withdrawal is required. Without extensive preparation and standardized protocols, these fundamental disparities in life-safety protocols could create unacceptable risks for personnel during any joint operations.
- 11.2.5 Furthermore, the need for Chinese Mainland personnel to rapidly familiarise themselves with different tools, operate equipment of varying standards, and adapt to unfamiliar building systems would likely reduce operational efficiency and introduce additional safety risks. These challenges become critically apparent in fundamental firefighting operations. Street fire hydrants and building fire service installations differ significantly between the Chinese Mainland and Hong Kong, particularly in their coupling systems for connecting fire hoses with water supply outlets. Hong Kong predominantly uses instantaneous couplings conforming to British Standards, while the Chinese Mainland employs Storz couplings under

Guobiao Standards. This incompatibility prevents Chinese Mainland personnel from establishing water supplies using Hong Kong's hydrant systems without specialized adapters, causing potentially catastrophic delays during fire suppression operations.

11.2.6 The operational challenges intensify in high-rise firefighting scenarios. Hong Kong's building design often necessitates conveying portable pumps to upper floors to maintain adequate water pressure for firefighting operations. Chinese Mainland firefighters, unfamiliar with Hong Kong's pump models and operating procedures, would struggle to deploy this equipment effectively in smoke-filled, zero-visibility environments. The unfamiliar controls, different pressure settings, and high-stress emergency conditions could create a dangerous combination where operational errors become highly probable. Such errors could result in pump failure and loss of water supply at critical moments, leaving firefighters unable to suppress advancing flames and potentially trapping them in deteriorating conditions.

11.2.7 The different brands of BA used between the two jurisdictions could create additional operational hazards. Each BA system features unique design elements, particularly in their emergency air supply mechanisms. In critical situations where a Chinese Mainland firefighter exhausts their air supply and requires emergency backup, the incompatibility between systems becomes life-threatening. Due to unfamiliarity with each other's equipment and emergency protocols, Hong Kong firefighters may be unable to connect their air supply systems to provide breathing air to a distressed Chinese Mainland firefighter. This technical incompatibility, compounded by the lack of cross-training on emergency air-sharing procedures,

could create scenarios where firefighters cannot perform basic emergency air sharing rescues. Such system incompatibilities inevitably escalate routine emergencies into potential fatalities, fundamentally compromising firefighter safety during joint operations.

11.3 *Safety Considerations*

11.3.1 As outlined above, firefighting, rescue and emergency evacuation procedures differ significantly between Hong Kong and the Chinese Mainland. Fire scenes present extremely hostile environments, characterised by intense heat, dense smoke, and rapidly evolving conditions; as a result, firefighters face severe operational constraints. While overwhelming heat impedes advancement into upper floors, confined spaces in staircases and corridors simultaneously limit personnel deployment at any given level. In addition, the persistent threat of re-ignition in previously extinguished areas means that crews must repeatedly revisit locations, thus further complicating an already challenging operation.

11.3.2 Deploying personnel unfamiliar with local operational protocols, building configurations, and communication systems into such a complex and hazardous setting would place them at significantly increased risk. This consideration does not cast any doubt on the professional competence of Chinese Mainland firefighters, but instead reflects practical operational limitations arising from systemic and procedural differences that must be carefully managed to ensure the safety of all personnel involved.

11.4 *Cross-Boundary Equipment Support*

11.4.1 Notwithstanding the above, the FSD adopted a pragmatic and effective approach to cross-border collaboration by accepting specialized equipment support from the Chinese Mainland. Specifically, the FSD borrowed ten UAS equipped with optical cameras and thermal imaging devices, as well as twenty sets of exoskeleton equipment. The UAS played a pivotal role in locating and assessing persons awaiting rescue and in monitoring fire development, thereby enabling timely and effective deployment of resources. The exoskeleton equipment significantly reduced physical strain on personnel during transportation and movement, providing valuable support during prolonged on-site operations.

12. Queries have been raised as to why the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Emergency Management Cooperation and Greater Bay Area Emergency Response Operation Cooperation Framework Agreement was not activated in this incident. It should be noted that while the agreement itself establishes a broad cooperation mechanism for contingencies, the initial phase of practical implementation has focused on natural disaster scenarios, such as earthquakes and floods. Following the signing of the Agreement, two cross-boundary exercises have been conducted in 2024 and 2025 covering natural disaster scenarios. In view of the complexity and differences in life-critical procedures between regions for large-scale building fires, this aspect will be further explored in the next stage with a phase-by-phase approach. Notwithstanding this, the FSD will engage with its counterparts in Guangdong and Macao to explore the feasibility of expediting to operationalize mutual assistance arrangements for large-scale building fires.

Part D - Responses to Queries on Dismantling of Burning Scaffolding

13. In response to these queries, the following explains the impracticability of dismantling burning scaffolding during the incident.

13.1 *Impracticability of Dismantling Burning Scaffolding*

13.1.1 Complete dismantling of the scaffolding while it was still burning and attached to the buildings was operationally unfeasible and counterproductive for the following reasons.

13.1.2 Firstly, even with the right tools and skillset, the dismantling of the massive structure would have required extensive manpower and excessive time taken away from the firefighting and rescue operations – time that victims trapped inside the buildings did not have. In a large fire with lives at stake, every second counts.

13.1.3 Dismantling the burning structure would also have exponentially increased the risk of falling debris, striking both firefighters and evacuating residents on the ground level and rekindling fires in the vicinity that had already been subdued or put out.

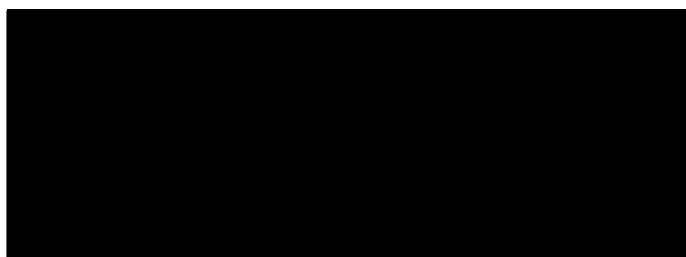
13.1.4 Finally, the massive structure, once dismantled, would have been reduced to nothing but a voluminous pile of burning bamboo sticks and scaffolding nets left on the ground, thereby causing further blockage to the vital entrances of the buildings from which they were torn.

13.1.5 The FSD's paramount objective is securing immediate interior access for firefighting and victim rescue. Saving lives is always the first priority; however, this must occur alongside firefighting efforts, as effective fire suppression is essential to ensure the successful implementation of rescue procedures. In permissive environments, the tactical decision therefore focused on clearing only essential pathways at building entrances rather than attempting comprehensive scaffolding removal. Full dismantling would have diverted critical resources from primary life-saving operations, causing potentially fatal delays in fire suppression and rescue efforts. Scaffolding removal could only be safely conducted after fire extinguishment when it would not compromise ongoing emergency operations.

[FSD/G(III)/1]
para. 5.3,
p. 49

14. I confirm that the contents of this Witness Statement are true to the best of my knowledge, information and belief.

Dated this 16th day of January 2026.



WONG Sze-lut, Sunny
Deputy Chief Fire Officer
(Operational Support and
Professional Development)
Fire Services Department