

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

Evidential Hearing

**The Honourable Mr Justice David Lok
The Honourable Mr Chan Kin-por, GBS, JP
Dr Rex Auyeung Pak-kuen, GBS, JP**

**On:
Day 12
Wednesday, 15 April 2026**

**Mr Victor Dawes SC, Mr Jason Yu, Mr SW Lee, Mr Jonathan Fung
appeared on behalf of the Independent Committee**

Mr Cedric Yeung appeared on behalf of ISS EastPoint Properties Ltd

**Mr Jenkin Suen SC, Mr Calvin Cheuk, Mr Michael Lok and Mr Charlie
Liu appeared on behalf of the Government**

Mr Jeffrey Tam appeared on behalf of the residents of Wang Fuk Court

Representatives of Department of Justice

**Mr Mike Lui SC and Mr Ross Yuen appeared on behalf of the Urban
Renewal Authority**

Representatives of Competition Commission

Solicitor for Hop On Management Company Limited

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<p>1 point so the director gave me instructions to be</p> <p>2 personally present at the scene.</p> <p>3 A support centre was created to support the FSCC to</p> <p>4 enhance communication.</p> <p>5 MR VICTOR DAWES: Among the issues we will explore, I am</p> <p>6 sure that you are the most appropriate person to talk</p> <p>7 about the FSCC.</p> <p>8 First I'd like to talk about the protocol and</p> <p>9 strategies when it comes to handling of calls for</p> <p>10 assistance to the FSD.</p> <p>11 We understand that on 26 November it was not</p> <p>12 a common fire; the volume of calls to 999 was rarely</p> <p>13 seen. We can't say whether it is unprecedented but we</p> <p>14 all understand that it was difficult.</p> <p>15 What we'd like to explore with you is what areas</p> <p>16 could be improved, what lessons have you learned from</p> <p>17 the incident. When it comes to calls for assistance,</p> <p>18 not everyone handles every single call perfectly because</p> <p>19 we understand that it was impossible. So please</p> <p>20 understand when we play the recordings of the calls,</p> <p>21 it's not a direct criticism against the operator because</p> <p>22 it was handled the best way they could given the</p> <p>23 situation. And there were callbacks, as you have stated</p> <p>24 in your witness statement. Some of the callers told us</p> <p>25 that because of these calls they felt assured and could</p>	<p>1 adequate."</p> <p>2 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right.</p> <p>3 MR VICTOR DAWES: Can you explain, because some of us are</p> <p>4 not privy to your statement, what is FSCC?</p> <p>5 MR WONG SZE LUT: The abbreviation of Fire Services</p> <p>6 Communications Centre.</p> <p>7 MR VICTOR DAWES: You said that the procedures adopted on</p> <p>8 that day were adequate.</p> <p>9 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right.</p> <p>10 MR VICTOR DAWES: In paragraph 4.2.1 in your second witness</p> <p>11 statement you said that under the current mechanism all</p> <p>12 999 calls were first managed by the police control and</p> <p>13 command centre so they were received by the police</p> <p>14 first. Once it was confirmed that it was about a fire,</p> <p>15 then it would be transferred to the FSCC.</p> <p>16 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right.</p> <p>17 MR VICTOR DAWES: We learned from the incoming call</p> <p>18 recordings that there would be three-way conference</p> <p>19 call, that is the caller, the police and the FSD were</p> <p>20 present during the calls to handle them.</p> <p>21 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right.</p> <p>22 MR VICTOR DAWES: You pointed out that the three-way phone</p> <p>23 conference was that the caller would provide information</p> <p>24 directly to the FSD. The role of the police was to</p> <p>25 provide assistance instead of giving you the</p>
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<p>1 remain calm.</p> <p>2 On that day, the FSD received 473 calls for</p> <p>3 assistance. Most of them were forwarded to the FSD via</p> <p>4 the 999 control centre; right?</p> <p>5 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right.</p> <p>6 MR VICTOR DAWES: I'd like to talk to you about the protocol</p> <p>7 of 999 calls. In paragraph 4.5.1 in your second witness</p> <p>8 statement, you said -- we understand that a large volume</p> <p>9 of calls were received on that day. You set up the</p> <p>10 support centre. You said:</p> <p>11 "FSCC was able to answer calls within an average of</p> <p>12 one minute ..."</p> <p>13 That is within one minute you were able to answer</p> <p>14 these calls. You said that:</p> <p>15 "... FSD is of the opinion that the staffing levels</p> <p>16 of FSCC were generally able to handle the volume of</p> <p>17 calls received on 26 November ... throughout the</p> <p>18 incident."</p> <p>19 That means when it comes to manpower, you thought</p> <p>20 that it was sufficient?</p> <p>21 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right.</p> <p>22 MR VICTOR DAWES: Let's look at 4.7.1. You said in one of</p> <p>23 the lines:</p> <p>24 "FSD considers its policies and procedures for</p> <p>25 handling incoming emergency calls in FSCC to have been</p>	<p>1 information.</p> <p>2 MR WONG SZE LUT: Correct.</p> <p>3 MR VICTOR DAWES: That's why in paragraph 4.2.3 there is an</p> <p>4 explanation about the flow.</p> <p>5 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right.</p> <p>6 MR VICTOR DAWES: I would like to know about your rationale</p> <p>7 and reasons for adopting this workflow in the handling</p> <p>8 of calls.</p> <p>9 What happened on that day, as we know, is that the</p> <p>10 call was connected to FSCC. Very often the caller will</p> <p>11 have to repeat information that had been already given</p> <p>12 to the police.</p> <p>13 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right.</p> <p>14 MR VICTOR DAWES: But that approach is not adopted by all</p> <p>15 corners of the world. Of course there are different</p> <p>16 approaches. I'd just like to ask you about the</p> <p>17 rationale for adopting this approach.</p> <p>18 Perhaps we will play you a sample recording. A2-9.</p> <p>19 There seems to be a hardware glitch.</p> <p>20 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: A reminder: the recording may</p> <p>21 cause disturbance to certain people. It's a reminder.</p> <p>22 If necessary, you can approach emotional support</p> <p>23 resources available here. If you feel disturbed, please</p> <p>24 ask for help. Thank you.</p> <p>25 (Audio played)</p>

Page 9	<p>1 AUDIO RECORDING: 999 Operator: 999.</p> <p>2 Caller: This is Tai Po construction site undergoing</p> <p>3 building renovation near Kwong Fuk Estate.</p> <p>4 999 Operator: I will connect you to the FSD.</p> <p>5 What's your family name?</p> <p>6 Caller: Wang Fuk Court.</p> <p>7 999 Operator: You are passerby or what?</p> <p>8 Caller: We are making a video-recording. There's</p> <p>9 a fire.</p> <p>10 999 Operator: Are you just looking from the ground</p> <p>11 floor? Driving past?</p> <p>12 FSD Operator: I can't hear you.</p> <p>13 999 Operator: Where is the fire?</p> <p>14 Caller: Tai Po, Wang Fuk Court. Facade</p> <p>15 maintenance, the scaffolding is on fire.</p> <p>16 FSD Operator: I understand. What house?</p> <p>17 Caller: Can't hear you.</p> <p>18 FSD Operator: What house?</p> <p>19 Caller: I don't know. I was cycling past. What</p> <p>20 house is it? Which house? Anyone know which house is</p> <p>21 it?</p> <p>22 Wang Cheong House. Which house? Anyone knows the</p> <p>23 address? Huge fire. Please, send someone over.</p> <p>24 FSD Operator: Yes, yes, we copy that. The</p> <p>25 ambulance has been dispatched.</p>	Page 11
Page 10	<p>1 Caller: Wang Cheong House, right?</p> <p>2 FSD Operator: You are at the roundabout.</p> <p>3 Caller: Wang Cheong House? Yes, of Wang Cheong</p> <p>4 House. The fire is fierce.</p> <p>5 FSD Operator: Yes, we're on our way.</p> <p>6 999 Operator: Please leave me a telephone number.</p> <p>7 (Long beep)</p> <p>8 Caller: Take a video-recording.</p> <p>9 999 Operator: Mr Sit, don't talk about making any</p> <p>10 video-recording. Is it the middle floor or lower floor?</p> <p>11 Caller: Lower floor.</p> <p>12 999 Operator: Yes, they are on their way.</p> <p>13 MR VICTOR DAWES: Well, this call involves the caller using</p> <p>14 12 seconds to explain and the FSD was connected in</p> <p>15 13 seconds and the FSD in 28 seconds spoke to the caller</p> <p>16 for the first time. It was a quick call. It was at the</p> <p>17 initial stage when the call for assistance was made.</p> <p>18 Please explain to us the purpose, because, according</p> <p>19 to the guidelines of 999 call centre, the majority of</p> <p>20 the situation, the first person who received the call</p> <p>21 would not ask for the location of the fire and the</p> <p>22 identity of the caller. That is the procedures for</p> <p>23 handling 999 calls, so stated quite clearly as well.</p> <p>24 Let's refer to WS2/1144. I'm sure you're very</p> <p>25 familiar with the procedure. Paragraph 3. You can see</p>	Page 12
	<p>1 line 4 is what I mentioned. Very often, of course, when</p> <p>2 the situation is not urgent that is not problematic, but</p> <p>3 during the Wang Fuk Court fire, the caller had to repeat</p> <p>4 the information to the FSD when the information had</p> <p>5 already been given to the police and the caller might be</p> <p>6 panicking. Repeating the information may put the caller</p> <p>7 under pressure.</p> <p>8 So after this incident, any thoughts? The mechanism</p> <p>9 under which the caller has to repeat information and the</p> <p>10 police will not provide any information to the FSD. At</p> <p>11 this stage, do you see things differently?</p> <p>12 MR WONG SZE LUT: This practice is longstanding. It is the</p> <p>13 result of many years of experience, which gives rise to</p> <p>14 this mechanism where both parties have to confirm the</p> <p>15 address of the call. All of the FSD dispatched has</p> <p>16 a bearing on life or death so we have to confirm the</p> <p>17 gender and age of the caller. But that's not the most</p> <p>18 important thing. The most important things are the</p> <p>19 telephone number and the address. There have been cases</p> <p>20 before that we failed to locate the caller because of</p> <p>21 the wrong address.</p> <p>22 The document you showed me is from the police.</p> <p>23 I understand their workflow very well. But can we trust</p> <p>24 the information given to us by the police fully?</p> <p>25 I don't think that's the case. I think our colleagues</p>	
	<p>1 have to confirm the information. Of course we</p> <p>2 understand the urgency and the distress experienced by</p> <p>3 the callers.</p> <p>4 From the recordings you can tell these are the daily</p> <p>5 situations that our colleagues face, but our colleagues</p> <p>6 try to calm the callers down to get the information they</p> <p>7 need. It is quite time-consuming to get all those</p> <p>8 information. But if in the end we can save time by</p> <p>9 getting the correct information, I would say that's</p> <p>10 a good strategy. It's better than ending the call</p> <p>11 quickly and going to the wrong place.</p> <p>12 MR VICTOR DAWES: I share the same views with you but it</p> <p>13 seems that in the police workflow, they do not have to</p> <p>14 confirm the identity and address of the caller. What</p> <p>15 they should do is to forward the call to you as soon as</p> <p>16 possible; is that right?</p> <p>17 MR WONG SZE LUT: I will not comment on their procedures.</p> <p>18 That's not within my ambit. I don't know the</p> <p>19 difficulties they face.</p> <p>20 MR VICTOR DAWES: Can I confirm this with you: when the</p> <p>21 police are alerted of a fire, they should not have spent</p> <p>22 more time to ask for the caller's information. What</p> <p>23 they should have done is to forward the call to you at</p> <p>24 once. Is that your understanding?</p> <p>25 MR WONG SZE LUT: That is my understanding in the most</p>	

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<p>1 perfect scenario.</p> <p>2 MR VICTOR DAWES: Understood. Many a time the situations</p> <p>3 are very complicated. But this time, the police has</p> <p>4 already confirmed the caller's details before forwarding</p> <p>5 the call to you and that's not according the mechanism;</p> <p>6 is that right?</p> <p>7 MR WONG SZE LUT: Correct.</p> <p>8 MR VICTOR DAWES: Sometimes they ask for the details because</p> <p>9 there's some time between the call and the fire, that's</p> <p>10 why they want to keep the call on. But from the</p> <p>11 recordings we have listened to, very often the callers</p> <p>12 have to repeat the information again.</p> <p>13 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right.</p> <p>14 MR VICTOR DAWES: Do you confirm that this is a deviation</p> <p>15 from the original design?</p> <p>16 MR WONG SZE LUT: I don't understand the question.</p> <p>17 MR VICTOR DAWES: I just want you to confirm that the police</p> <p>18 is the first responder, but according to the original</p> <p>19 design, they do not have to ask for the information.</p> <p>20 MR WONG SZE LUT: It seems so, because that's also the case</p> <p>21 for our responders.</p> <p>22 MR VICTOR DAWES: As you have said, you won't rely</p> <p>23 completely on the information given to you by the</p> <p>24 police?</p> <p>25 MR WONG SZE LUT: Correct. But I have to emphasise that</p>	<p>1 the FSD. Is that also your understanding?</p> <p>2 MR WONG SZE LUT: There were indeed calls which had to be</p> <p>3 put on hold on our part. I'm also aware that some</p> <p>4 callers had to wait already when they called the 999</p> <p>5 centres. I am not fully clear about the situation since</p> <p>6 this is something to do with 999. I'm just aware that</p> <p>7 there are some 200 lines.</p> <p>8 MR VICTOR DAWES: Let's listen to another call. The third</p> <p>9 call from Wang Cheong House. They lived in flat 502.</p> <p>10 At 3:00:02, they called the line and the call was picked</p> <p>11 up after 13 seconds.</p> <p>12 (Audio played)</p> <p>13 AUDIO RECORDING: 999 Operator: 999, how can I help you?</p> <p>14 Caller: Wang Cheong House, there is a fire.</p> <p>15 999 Operator: I will forward you to the FSD.</p> <p>16 MR VICTOR DAWES: Please pause.</p> <p>17 This is another example. The call was forwarded to</p> <p>18 the FSD swiftly. It seems to be the design of the</p> <p>19 mechanism: the call should have been forwarded to the</p> <p>20 fire services immediately.</p> <p>21 MR WONG SZE LUT: Agreed.</p> <p>22 MR VICTOR DAWES: At 3 pm there were a lot of callers. The</p> <p>23 caller waited for one minute and 32 seconds before the</p> <p>24 call was picked up by you.</p> <p>25 Please continue to play the recording.</p>
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<p>1 very often the police officers that dispatch help us</p> <p>2 a lot. Sometimes we are unable to obtain information,</p> <p>3 but the police would give us those information which</p> <p>4 they have previously obtained from the callers.</p> <p>5 MR VICTOR DAWES: I'm interested in the guidelines as well</p> <p>6 as the directions given to frontline responders. We</p> <p>7 have seen situations where the callers have to repeat</p> <p>8 the information they have given and also I want to ask</p> <p>9 you a question about the bottlenecks.</p> <p>10 From the police evidence, according to the PCCC,</p> <p>11 there are three 999 calling centres and there are</p> <p>12 69 lines at each centre. So at the same time they can</p> <p>13 handle more than 207 calls. At the same time, at the</p> <p>14 FSCC, you have 30 lines open.</p> <p>15 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.</p> <p>16 MR VICTOR DAWES: During daytime, there are 37 colleagues on</p> <p>17 duty, 31 at night; that's the usual situation.</p> <p>18 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right.</p> <p>19 MR VICTOR DAWES: And you also mentioned that you can handle</p> <p>20 at most 30 calls at once since there are 30 lines.</p> <p>21 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.</p> <p>22 MR VICTOR DAWES: During this fire, we saw that many callers</p> <p>23 called the lines at once, so inevitably there were</p> <p>24 bottlenecks. But because the police has more lines, the</p> <p>25 bottlenecks occur when the police forwarded the calls to</p>	<p>1 (Audio played)</p> <p>2 AUDIO RECORDING: Caller: There's a lot of smoke on the</p> <p>3 other side.</p> <p>4 999 Operator: Do you know which floor it is?</p> <p>5 Caller: There is a fire.</p> <p>6 999 Operator: Which floor? Do you know which</p> <p>7 floor? Which floor? Which floor?</p> <p>8 Caller: I don't know. I'm at home.</p> <p>9 999 Operator: Are you safe?</p> <p>10 Caller: The smoke has entered my flat.</p> <p>11 999 Operator: The smoke has entered your flat?</p> <p>12 Caller: Yes.</p> <p>13 999 Operator: What is your surname?</p> <p>14 Caller: I'm a domestic helper. I live with the</p> <p>15 elderly lady.</p> <p>16 999 Operator: What's your phone number?</p> <p>17 (Long beep)</p> <p>18 Don't hang up. Please wait for the ambulance man to</p> <p>19 ask for more information.</p> <p>20 You're at Wang Cheong House, Wang Fuk Court?</p> <p>21 Caller: Right.</p> <p>22 999 Operator: I can tell you preliminarily the fire</p> <p>23 services are rushing to the scene.</p> <p>24 Please do not hang up. Please wait for the fire</p> <p>25 services.</p>

Page 17	<p>1 (Calling tone)</p> <p>2 Caller: I'm calling 999. Hello?</p> <p>3 FSD Operator: Lady, how can I help you?</p> <p>4 Caller: There is a fire. This is Wang Cheong House</p> <p>5 at Wang Fuk Court.</p> <p>6 FSD Operator: Yes, we see that there is a fire at</p> <p>7 Wang Cheong House. Fire appliances are coming. Do you</p> <p>8 need firemen to rescue you?</p> <p>9 Caller: Yes, we need. There's just the two of us</p> <p>10 at home, me and the elderly lady.</p> <p>11 FSD Operator: So you need firemen to take you out?</p> <p>12 Caller: Yes.</p> <p>13 FSD Operator: Where are you?</p> <p>14 Caller: Flat 502.</p> <p>15 FSD Operator: 502?</p> <p>16 Caller: Yes.</p> <p>17 FSD Operator: 502. How many people are there</p> <p>18 inside?</p> <p>19 (Long beep)</p> <p>20 How many people are there?</p> <p>21 Caller: Me and the elderly lady.</p> <p>22 FSD Operator: So just the two of you?</p> <p>23 Caller: Yes.</p> <p>24 FSD Operator: How old are you?</p> <p>25 Caller: I am 39.</p>	Page 19	<p>1 reconnected.</p> <p>2 So what I would like to explore with you is that</p> <p>3 paragraph 4.4.2 in your witness statement you mentioned</p> <p>4 that at 15:20 hours, the director's command post has</p> <p>5 activated and some 80 uniformed members were mobilised,</p> <p>6 the support centre was established and there were an</p> <p>7 additional 18 dedicated hotlines. In your third witness</p> <p>8 statement you also mention the support centre was not</p> <p>9 mainly for picking up calls. They were mainly for</p> <p>10 calling back, that is calling the callers back.</p> <p>11 So that's the bottleneck on the day. We understand</p> <p>12 that's not something that would occur on a daily basis.</p> <p>13 However, after the fire, do you think there are ways to</p> <p>14 overcome this bottleneck?</p> <p>15 MR WONG SZE LUT: At the time, our colleagues were also very</p> <p>16 eager to pick up the calls, even a second sooner. Of</p> <p>17 course we need to improve efficiency in terms of</p> <p>18 manpower, hardware and technology, we would like to</p> <p>19 enhance our capacity further in the future; that is</p> <p>20 something that we must do.</p> <p>21 MR VICTOR DAWES: But that's a question of resources; right?</p> <p>22 If there were more colleagues to handle the lines, it</p> <p>23 would be faster, but there were only so many colleagues.</p> <p>24 MR WONG SZE LUT: Correct. As I mentioned, we have</p> <p>25 30 lines. Usually they would not be running at full</p>
Page 18	<p>1 FSD Operator: 39, lady. So what's the age of the</p> <p>2 elderly lady?</p> <p>3 Caller: She's 98 years old.</p> <p>4 FSD Operator: 98 years old. Do you see fire and</p> <p>5 smoke?</p> <p>6 Caller: Yes, there is a huge fire.</p> <p>7 FSD Operator: Is your flat on fire?</p> <p>8 Caller: No, but the smoke has entered the house and</p> <p>9 it is all black out.</p> <p>10 FSD Operator: Are you safe?</p> <p>11 Caller: We are still okay.</p> <p>12 FSD Operator: Do you need firemen to take you out?</p> <p>13 Do you need firemen to rescue you from the scene?</p> <p>14 Caller: Yes. I'm very scared.</p> <p>15 FSD Operator: Yes. Please stay calm. We will send</p> <p>16 firemen to you.</p> <p>17 Caller: Okay.</p> <p>18 FSD Operator: Thank you.</p> <p>19 MR VICTOR DAWES: So that's the whole of the recording.</p> <p>20 I played it in full because that's quite typical of the</p> <p>21 calls we heard. But this is rather swiftly handled.</p> <p>22 There were calls which were picked up after 15 minutes,</p> <p>23 that's because of the huge volume of calls.</p> <p>24 So we heard some beeping sound because there were</p> <p>25 interruptions in between, but afterwards the call was</p>	Page 20	<p>1 capacity. If we receive some 2,000 calls for ambulances</p> <p>2 and 100 calls for fire services, but there would be</p> <p>3 surplus capacity. Our colleagues would be off duty on</p> <p>4 rotation, but on that day we had called all the</p> <p>5 colleagues who were off duty to come and man the support</p> <p>6 centre. So, originally, the callback procedures would</p> <p>7 have been conducted by our centres ourselves but our</p> <p>8 support centres have helped us on that. We fully</p> <p>9 mobilised our colleagues.</p> <p>10 So the 80 colleagues were redeployed from their</p> <p>11 original post, they were redeployed on an urgent basis</p> <p>12 from the headquarters.</p> <p>13 MR VICTOR DAWES: According to the 407 calls received by the</p> <p>14 police, on average, the calling time was three minutes</p> <p>15 and 24 seconds. Excluding the waiting time, on average,</p> <p>16 each call took two minutes.</p> <p>17 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes. But I have something to add. So the</p> <p>18 calling time might be two minutes, but after taking the</p> <p>19 information, our colleagues had to input the data</p> <p>20 simultaneously and also they had to communicate with</p> <p>21 frontline officers through radio telephones to relay the</p> <p>22 message to the frontline firemen. So for each call, it</p> <p>23 took some five minutes.</p> <p>24 MR VICTOR DAWES: So my point is, in fact, it should have</p> <p>25 been more than three minutes.</p>

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<p>1 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right.</p> <p>2 MR VICTOR DAWES: After obtaining the information and</p> <p>3 combining the waiting time, it is more than five</p> <p>4 minutes.</p> <p>5 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right.</p> <p>6 MR VICTOR DAWES: So this time, on average -- of course some</p> <p>7 calls took longer, some took shorter, so on average, how</p> <p>8 long was the waiting time?</p> <p>9 MR WONG SZE LUT: It was quite long. But my point is we</p> <p>10 have conducted a survey afterwards. After the Wang Fuk</p> <p>11 Court fire, we have conducted an analysis concerning the</p> <p>12 calls and the waiting time was 58 seconds, so within one</p> <p>13 minute. So of course the recording you showed us was</p> <p>14 more extreme. I don't think 58 seconds is good enough</p> <p>15 but, as I said, our goal is to pick up the calls</p> <p>16 immediately. So, according to my witness statement,</p> <p>17 from this perspective, I think our deployment was</p> <p>18 adequate.</p> <p>19 MR VICTOR DAWES: The 58-second waiting time, 4.5.1,</p> <p>20 page 164 in your witness statement, you said this in</p> <p>21 reply to our question:</p> <p>22 "Despite the surge in the volume of calls [on that</p> <p>23 day] with the establishment of Support Centre, the FSCC</p> <p>24 was able to answer calls within an average of one minute</p> <p>25 for the rest of the day."</p>	<p>1 MR VICTOR DAWES: According to your experience, to obtain</p> <p>2 this information, it would take some five minutes.</p> <p>3 MR WONG SZE LUT: Not for obtaining information. That's</p> <p>4 including all the other actions. Ordinarily speaking,</p> <p>5 it took some two to three minutes, as you have</p> <p>6 mentioned.</p> <p>7 MR VICTOR DAWES: The average duration of the call was three</p> <p>8 minutes and the wait was one minute, so two minutes are</p> <p>9 not enough to obtain all the information you need.</p> <p>10 MR WONG SZE LUT: We can obtain all the information within</p> <p>11 two minutes, but then the duration should be longer than</p> <p>12 two minutes.</p> <p>13 MR VICTOR DAWES: So my question is, from these data, can</p> <p>14 you identify the challenges? From when the call was</p> <p>15 forwarded to the FSD, the duration is three minutes,</p> <p>16 24 seconds. So, according to your experience, it would</p> <p>17 take more than two minutes and the waiting time was less</p> <p>18 than one minute. So why would these calls last only</p> <p>19 three minutes on that day? What's your observation now</p> <p>20 concerning the reasons behind? Let's assume the data</p> <p>21 are correct.</p> <p>22 MR WONG SZE LUT: I will try to understand your question</p> <p>23 like this. 58 seconds means the average time that the</p> <p>24 caller has to wait, then the call would be picked up.</p> <p>25 Using your previous example, it took three minutes,</p>
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<p>1 It means for the rest of the time after that call.</p> <p>2 So in terms of the staffing level, it was able to handle</p> <p>3 the volume of calls received on that day.</p> <p>4 So this is a question: this version of answering the</p> <p>5 calls within one minute, most of the calls took three</p> <p>6 minutes 24 seconds in total. So you said you were able</p> <p>7 to answer the calls within one minute. It seems that</p> <p>8 from the time when the call was made to the time when</p> <p>9 the call was picked up by the FSD, it was within one</p> <p>10 minute. So do you mean, counting from the time the call</p> <p>11 was forwarded by the police?</p> <p>12 MR WONG SZE LUT: From the time when the call was forwarded</p> <p>13 to the police until our colleagues pick up the call.</p> <p>14 MR VICTOR DAWES: You mentioned "for the rest of the day".</p> <p>15 What does that mean? It means after the establishment</p> <p>16 of the FSCC?</p> <p>17 MR WONG SZE LUT: No. It is difficult to select only the</p> <p>18 calls from Wang Fuk Court to conduct analysis. So after</p> <p>19 the fire, say 14:52 and beyond, all the calls made from</p> <p>20 Wang Fuk Court until the small hours -- the Wang Fuk</p> <p>21 Court fire has spanned across two days, so from that</p> <p>22 point onward, for all the calls, we were able to pick up</p> <p>23 the calls within an average time of 58 seconds. So on</p> <p>24 average the caller only had to wait for 58 seconds</p> <p>25 before the calls were picked up.</p>	<p>1 28 seconds to obtain the information, and then the</p> <p>2 information was forwarded to the frontline officers, but</p> <p>3 that took one or two minutes. So the total duration of</p> <p>4 the call would be five to six minutes. Three minutes</p> <p>5 28 seconds, as mentioned by yourself, that's different.</p> <p>6 58 seconds means the waiting time.</p> <p>7 MR VICTOR DAWES: Are there directions or guidelines on the</p> <p>8 ideal time of duration of call from when the call is</p> <p>9 picked up to obtaining the information?</p> <p>10 MR WONG SZE LUT: The faster the better. We don't have</p> <p>11 a rigid target. Different callers have different</p> <p>12 abilities to express themselves. There are some</p> <p>13 occasions where we could not obtain the information even</p> <p>14 after 10 to 20 minutes. There are even callers who</p> <p>15 speak foreign languages, so we can't set a rigid target</p> <p>16 for our colleagues to meet. But if you ask me what we</p> <p>17 were taught in our training, the faster the better.</p> <p>18 MR VICTOR DAWES: I'm asking this not because I want to test</p> <p>19 your memory. If you refer to B3/2689, this document is</p> <p>20 called "MC standing orders". Can you tell me what this</p> <p>21 document is about, what it's used for?</p> <p>22 MR WONG SZE LUT: It is for the mobilising team. We have</p> <p>23 three grades: we have those extinguishing fires; we have</p> <p>24 those who are of the ambulance command; we have also</p> <p>25 those deploying resources. This is the guidelines they</p>

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<p>1 would follow so they know what to do.</p> <p>2 MR VICTOR DAWES: I can see here in the second paragraph or</p> <p>3 second part, 2.1.1, it says here simply, "Quick", to</p> <p>4 quickly deal with things, I suppose. And you can see</p> <p>5 (c) about receiving reports: after the call is connected</p> <p>6 the deploying officer should obtain information from the</p> <p>7 one making the report as soon as possible and in most</p> <p>8 cases it should not exceed one minute, and the</p> <p>9 mobilisation officer, whether it is dealing with a fire</p> <p>10 or emergency rescue requests. This is your indicator,</p> <p>11 it may not be a hard performance indicator.</p> <p>12 MR WONG SZE LUT: It's not.</p> <p>13 MR VICTOR DAWES: But in general it would take two-odd</p> <p>14 minutes to obtain information; when you talk about</p> <p>15 obtaining information within one minute, there seems to</p> <p>16 be a discrepancy. Should I put it that way?</p> <p>17 MR WONG SZE LUT: You shouldn't put it that way.</p> <p>18 MR VICTOR DAWES: It's not a criticism. I just want to say</p> <p>19 this.</p> <p>20 MR WONG SZE LUT: If you look at subheading 2.1.1, "Quick",</p> <p>21 it says within one minute is the target. We think it</p> <p>22 should not be one minute. If you can do it quicker,</p> <p>23 you should do it quicker. But you can't tell officers</p> <p>24 what to do without performance indicator. So with the</p> <p>25 setting of the target being one minute, you should aim</p>	<p>1 training and instructions given to officers.</p> <p>2 Now, on that day, the circumstances were indeed</p> <p>3 complex and this is not the general cases you would deal</p> <p>4 with. Can you explain in greater detail the information</p> <p>5 you have to obtain from those making reports, the</p> <p>6 duration of calls, how you're dealing with those, how it</p> <p>7 is different from general cases? I understand there may</p> <p>8 be a need to have the call exceed one minute and I do</p> <p>9 understand a lot of people were making calls. Why is</p> <p>10 there such a difference in obtaining information?</p> <p>11 MR WONG SZE LUT: I will try to explain this. For example,</p> <p>12 when there is a fire in the unit, I will call 999.</p> <p>13 I will tell them the address, where it is. It's very</p> <p>14 clear. But then with this fire, I'm sure you know, it</p> <p>15 spread very quickly. For the first one reporting the</p> <p>16 fire, he could not make clear where the fire was, not</p> <p>17 even the block. And we received many calls which were</p> <p>18 not from those in the fire, they were helping people</p> <p>19 make the reports, they didn't even know where their</p> <p>20 family or relative was. So it took much time to clarify</p> <p>21 such information.</p> <p>22 It is different in terms of nature from the general</p> <p>23 cases. It also depends on, as I said earlier,</p> <p>24 communication ability of those making reports, and often</p> <p>25 they would be nervous. We would have to try to calm</p>
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<p>1 to achieve it, and if you can be quicker, you should be</p> <p>2 quicker.</p> <p>3 MR VICTOR DAWES: My observation is that what you said is</p> <p>4 correct. But then it deviates from what is written in</p> <p>5 the indicator because it says here in most cases it</p> <p>6 should not exceed one minute. So is it the problem with</p> <p>7 the performance indicator or you cannot achieve this in</p> <p>8 reality, or is it that there are different expectations</p> <p>9 of officers?</p> <p>10 MR WONG SZE LUT: Let's say for most cases the Wang Fuk</p> <p>11 Court incident should not be regarded as most cases.</p> <p>12 Earlier you talked about the three-minute example.</p> <p>13 It has exceeded indeed one minute. Because this is</p> <p>14 indeed a special case, it is described as an</p> <p>15 unprecedented case by colleagues, and I agree.</p> <p>16 I would say with the one-minute performance</p> <p>17 indicator, we need to adjust it from time to time. And</p> <p>18 you can see here, down there at the signature part, you</p> <p>19 can see when this is from, it is 2025. We will update</p> <p>20 this from time to time. We do thank you for pointing</p> <p>21 this out. We will perhaps review this with officers to</p> <p>22 see how we can write this better. I would say there is</p> <p>23 still no hard target.</p> <p>24 MR VICTOR DAWES: I understand that guidelines have to be</p> <p>25 updated from time to time. It is also relevant to</p>	<p>1 them down, ask them to say it slowly. So it took some</p> <p>2 time.</p> <p>3 MR VICTOR DAWES: Let me put it this way. From your</p> <p>4 explanation, this performance indicator would work for</p> <p>5 most cases, but for a more complex case like the</p> <p>6 Wang Fuk Court incident, it would be difficult.</p> <p>7 MR WONG SZE LUT: I would say apart from the FSCC personnel,</p> <p>8 I am also responsible for operational support and</p> <p>9 professional development. I also have the</p> <p>10 responsibility to advise senior management on the</p> <p>11 drafting of guidelines. For all of the guidelines, they</p> <p>12 are drawn up based on past experience. With this</p> <p>13 incident, the guidelines in most cases would not be</p> <p>14 applicable. The guidelines are not to be applicable</p> <p>15 across the board. We do understand that officers, when</p> <p>16 they're out there, they need to exercise their own</p> <p>17 discretion, especially the commander. They need to be</p> <p>18 flexible. So it's not a hard and fast rule.</p> <p>19 We have guidelines for them to refer to so that they</p> <p>20 in general know what to do, but for the Wang Fuk Court</p> <p>21 incident, with this large-scale incident, officers would</p> <p>22 make use of their wisdom and their flexibility to do</p> <p>23 what they're supposed to do.</p> <p>24 MR VICTOR DAWES: All right. Having considered the</p> <p>25 difficulties, let's look at what we can improve more on</p>

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<p>1 or what we can learn from the experience. We can see 2 a lot of people couldn't wait for the calls to be 3 connected to the Fire Services Department; after they 4 talked to the police their calls got disconnected. 5 There are a lot of such cases. The first one is Wang 6 Cheong House 1005, Ms Wong Ka Yuen. She called very 7 early on, at 14:52, and 24 seconds later the police took 8 the call. 9 (Audio played) 10 AUDIO RECORDING: 999 Operator: Police. 11 Caller: Yes. 12 999 Operator: Do you want police or ambulance? 13 Caller: Wang Fuk Court, Wang Cheong House. I smell 14 something very smelly. There is smoke in the corridor, 15 a lot of smoke and the scaffoldings are on fire. 16 999 Operator: Yes. The scaffoldings were lit on 17 fire, right? Can you go to a safe location first? 18 Caller: Okay. 19 999 Operator: Okay. Do you see where the smoke is, 20 on which floor? 21 Caller: I'm on the 10th floor. There's a lot of 22 smoke. There's a lot of smoke in the corridor. 23 999 Operator: There are a lot of reports. Can you 24 go to a safe location first. There is smoke all over 25 the 10th floor, right?</p>	<p>1 specifically the information coming from the police? 2 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right. 3 MR VICTOR DAWES: I understand in general cases this is not 4 a problem, but for a large-scale incident such as the 5 Wang Fuk Court incident, this is not very effective. 6 MR WONG SZE LUT: What do you mean by not very effective? 7 Do you think there is a better way? 8 MR VICTOR DAWES: I'm just asking you. 9 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: Well, I would say using fax 10 is -- 11 MR WONG SZE LUT: We agree. It's better to have this system 12 simply transfer the data to us. But when we developed 13 the system, then there was no such technology. 14 MR VICTOR DAWES: So the police obtained such information 15 and sent it to the Fire Services Department and faxed it 16 to you; when did this start? 17 MR WONG SZE LUT: I don't know. But when I was at a lower 18 rank, 2010s, that was already done that way. 19 MR VICTOR DAWES: As the chairman said, let's explore the 20 issue of fax. Fax is a technology that is rendered 21 mostly outdated. People don't really use fax these days 22 because this is not the most effective means of 23 communication. 24 MR WONG SZE LUT: You can put it that way, but with the 25 transmission of such information there aren't that many</p>
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<p>1 (Calling tone) 2 MR VICTOR DAWES: I have two questions for you. If we look 3 at the guidelines, the police are not supposed to or 4 they do not need to ask that much information, 5 they should connect the call right to the Fire Services 6 Department, right, that is your understanding? 7 MR WONG SZE LUT: I guess we can put it this way. 8 MR VICTOR DAWES: And we have seen quite a number of cases, 9 they cannot wait for the calls to be connected to the 10 Fire Services Department. How are these cases 11 coordinated between the FSD and police? 12 MR WONG SZE LUT: If they can't wait, the police would still 13 have a mechanism to refer the information to us. 14 MR VICTOR DAWES: What will they do, actually? Will they 15 call a centre and repeat the information orally or would 16 they input such information? 17 MR WONG SZE LUT: We have seen quite a number of cases of 18 such. They would fax to us in paper copies. 19 MR VICTOR DAWES: So basically they would record such 20 information in written form and then they would fax it 21 to you. 22 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes. 23 MR VICTOR DAWES: Where will it be faxed? 24 MR WONG SZE LUT: To the FSCC. 25 MR VICTOR DAWES: And an officer would be looking at</p>	<p>1 ways we can make calls and that was originally the means 2 used, and then we converted to fax. It was better. But 3 when we talk about at present, of course there's room 4 for improvement. 5 MR VICTOR DAWES: We have talked about there being computer 6 systems and communication equipment. For the police's 7 system, with the connection, apart from making use of 8 phone line for fax connection, is there a connection 9 with the systems? 10 MR WONG SZE LUT: From what I understand, none. 11 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: What you said earlier about 12 the police taking calls, they would transfer the calls 13 to you right away. 14 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right. 15 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: When they transfer the calls, 16 would they say -- because the calls would have to be put 17 on hold for a while. Would that be the case that at 18 that time the police could obtain information during 19 then? Can we do these simultaneously, or is it the case 20 that they have to complete the conversation and then 21 they can transfer the call? 22 MR WONG SZE LUT: I believe they were doing both at the same 23 time. I can see that the police was doing that and 24 maintained a conversation with the caller. 25 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: I think this is a good thing</p>

Page 33	<p>1 to do; they are put on hold and they are talking to</p> <p>2 them.</p> <p>3 MR WONG SZE LUT: I cannot really say from a general</p> <p>4 perspective, but I can say from a personal perspective</p> <p>5 it sounds good.</p> <p>6 MR VICTOR DAWES: If we look at the guidelines, the police</p> <p>7 can transfer the calls very quickly to the FSD so they</p> <p>8 should not be trying to obtain information. Of course</p> <p>9 there are cases in which they were trying to calm the</p> <p>10 ones seeking assistance down, and a lot of information</p> <p>11 was provided to the police, but the guidelines, you were</p> <p>12 supposed to obtain such information; again you couldn't</p> <p>13 rely on such information; right?</p> <p>14 MR WONG SZE LUT: We couldn't rely on such information.</p> <p>15 MR VICTOR DAWES: So there are pros and cons. They would be</p> <p>16 able to calm the callers down but messages get repeated.</p> <p>17 MR WONG SZE LUT: Correct.</p> <p>18 MR VICTOR DAWES: I can also see some examples where the</p> <p>19 callers have hung up and the police stayed on the line</p> <p>20 to transmit what the caller said to the FSD officers.</p> <p>21 In your understanding or according to what you said, it</p> <p>22 should not be the general protocol. The information</p> <p>23 should be faxed should be; is that right?</p> <p>24 MR WONG SZE LUT: Are you talking about once the call is</p> <p>25 connected, there's a three-way call?</p>	Page 35	<p>1 MR VICTOR DAWES: This is what you've seen happen before?</p> <p>2 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right.</p> <p>3 MR VICTOR DAWES: This is not what is in the guidelines?</p> <p>4 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right.</p> <p>5 MR VICTOR DAWES: According to the guidelines, they should</p> <p>6 fax it to you?</p> <p>7 MR WONG SZE LUT: There is no such specific instruction in</p> <p>8 the guidelines. I'm not sure if the police have</p> <p>9 guidelines in that regard but we have guidelines on how</p> <p>10 this information can be received.</p> <p>11 MR VICTOR DAWES: So basically, for the agreed mechanism,</p> <p>12 someone is seeking assistance from the police side, how</p> <p>13 should they transfer such information to the Fire</p> <p>14 Services Department the fastest way?</p> <p>15 MR WONG SZE LUT: I disagree. You were asking whether there</p> <p>16 were such guidelines. I understand you meant whether</p> <p>17 there was something written. There is no such thing.</p> <p>18 But according to the mechanism, they can pass such</p> <p>19 information on the call. They can wait until the call</p> <p>20 is connected to us, or there are other phone lines, they</p> <p>21 can make use of other phone lines to communicate this to</p> <p>22 us. They can also transfer such information to us by</p> <p>23 fax.</p> <p>24 MR VICTOR DAWES: This is not a criticism. But if the</p> <p>25 frontline officers did not do what you said, the problem</p>
Page 34	<p>1 MR VICTOR DAWES: A previous example we discussed,</p> <p>2 a one-minute odd call, the individual told the police</p> <p>3 there was a fire and the call was supposed to be</p> <p>4 transferred to the Fire Services Department and after</p> <p>5 one minute-odd wait, the call was disconnected and the</p> <p>6 police personnel was still on the line and transmitted</p> <p>7 information to the FSD colleague. This is not a general</p> <p>8 practice; right?</p> <p>9 MR WONG SZE LUT: This is one of the ways we can go about</p> <p>10 it. So the caller provided information to the police,</p> <p>11 the police conveyed the information to the FSD officer;</p> <p>12 this is one of the ones.</p> <p>13 MR VICTOR DAWES: Right. The caller hung up and then the</p> <p>14 police personnel.</p> <p>15 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right, they conveyed such information to</p> <p>16 the FSD officer.</p> <p>17 MR VICTOR DAWES: But they were supposed to fax it to you.</p> <p>18 MR WONG SZE LUT: That's one of the ways, this is the most</p> <p>19 common way. But if they can't wait for the call to be</p> <p>20 connected, say on the police side, they can make use of</p> <p>21 fax.</p> <p>22 MR VICTOR DAWES: According to your protocol, is it the case</p> <p>23 the officer from the police's side should wait?</p> <p>24 MR WONG SZE LUT: We do not have procedural guidelines for</p> <p>25 what the police side should do.</p>	Page 36	<p>1 is there will be many different practices arising out of</p> <p>2 that. Of course for some they will be thinking on their</p> <p>3 feet, which is good, but in these cases, we see that</p> <p>4 a lot of calls could not hold on long enough for the</p> <p>5 calls to be connected to the FSD and the lines were cut.</p> <p>6 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right.</p> <p>7 MR VICTOR DAWES: Do you agree that if everything is written</p> <p>8 in black and white -- without things being written in</p> <p>9 black and white, that means colleagues will not be able</p> <p>10 to follow systematically?</p> <p>11 MR WONG SZE LUT: Let me put it this way. Of course if it's</p> <p>12 in black and white it would be good. However, more</p> <p>13 often than not, well, when the colleagues first joined,</p> <p>14 they would join the mobilising and communications</p> <p>15 division. In their inception training, they maintain</p> <p>16 close relationship with the Police Control and Command</p> <p>17 Centre. We receive training in this regard to keep</p> <p>18 close liaison with them.</p> <p>19 There's also on-the-job training. Of course it can</p> <p>20 be put in writing, but as to whether there is a need to</p> <p>21 put everything in black and white, I think we are</p> <p>22 training about the basic skills when they join, the two</p> <p>23 centres maintain communications.</p> <p>24 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: Well, can I put it this way.</p> <p>25 It's not a criticism. Most of the time the FSD can</p>

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1 handle all the calls. That is accepted. However, this
 2 time there is a bottleneck, as we see from this
 3 incident. Should there be a clear mechanism, that is,
 4 when the call reaches the police but not the FSD, how
 5 will it be handled?
 6 MR WONG SZE LUT: I agree. In this regard we will of course
 7 liaise with the police as to how we can both do better.
 8 MR VICTOR DAWES: I understand.
 9 In relation to the communications, of course there
 10 are well-established and effective mechanisms. However,
 11 when it comes to major disasters, when there is a large
 12 volume of calls coming in, what we're looking at may not
 13 be something complicated. It's just that the police
 14 received information, the FSD did not pick up the call.
 15 How is the information passed on? What is the best way
 16 to provide the information to the FSD? From what you
 17 said, currently, it relies on your tacit understanding
 18 or your established practice, but there is no
 19 established mechanism and this is something that you
 20 will consider.
 21 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right. We will improve the mechanism as
 22 well.
 23 MR VICTOR DAWES: The next issue I will look into with you
 24 is something we have heard before. A call was received.
 25 You relied entirely on the police to transfer the call

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1 to you, but sometimes the information given to the
 2 police was not passed on to the FSD or there was
 3 a discrepancy, that is, when the information was given
 4 to the police and then the caller panicked or was at
 5 a loss and forgot to give information to the FSD. But
 6 there are guidelines. Let's refer to WS2/1144. That's
 7 the page number.
 8 This is also a guideline of the police.
 9 I understand that you may not be able to answer the
 10 question thoroughly, but I think it's something to do
 11 with communications with the FSD. 3, it says "Calls
 12 Requiring an Ambulance or Fire Service Response".
 13 You're aware of the guidelines?
 14 MR WONG SZE LUT: Not all of it.
 15 MR VICTOR DAWES: In relation to this guideline, have you
 16 seen this before?
 17 MR WONG SZE LUT: No.
 18 MR VICTOR DAWES: In relation to handling of calls to 999,
 19 the police guidelines, it seems that the guidelines have
 20 not been passed on to you or you have not communicated
 21 with them.
 22 MR WONG SZE LUT: You can't say it this way. Perhaps some
 23 of our colleagues have viewed these.
 24 MR VICTOR DAWES: Let's go up a bit, paragraph 4. It says:
 25 "When there is a major fire, accident or disaster,

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1 it is common for the case to be reported from many
 2 sources."
 3 You understand that of course.
 4 It continues to say:
 5 "If the operator knows that the caller is reporting
 6 an incident that is already being actioned, the operator
 7 will ascertain whether the caller has any information
 8 about victims in the incident, eg the caller is calling
 9 from inside the fire scene or a building opposite and
 10 can see trapped people. In such case the operator will
 11 transfer the call ... if the caller is merely reporting
 12 the incident and has no additional information [then]
 13 the operator will thank the caller and close the
 14 conversation."
 15 The practice stated in paragraph 4, you can see it
 16 now; right?
 17 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.
 18 MR VICTOR DAWES: Do you know that that's the practice of
 19 the police, in other words, if the operator receives
 20 a call and they are aware that a call or a report has
 21 been made to the police or the FSD, then the operator
 22 will ask to see if there is relevant information about
 23 people affected or trapped, say, for example, whether
 24 someone is trapped, whether the caller is looking at
 25 a fire in an opposite building, then the call will be

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1 transferred to you. However, if it's just a mere
 2 reporting without additional information, then the
 3 operator will thank the caller and then close the
 4 conversation. Do you know that that's their practice?
 5 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes, I do.
 6 MR VICTOR DAWES: So in relation to the police, their
 7 operators will decide first whether the incident
 8 reported by the caller is being handled, whether there
 9 is a need to connect the call to the FSD. If there is
 10 useful information, it will be passed on to you; if not,
 11 the call will be ended.
 12 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right.
 13 MR VICTOR DAWES: However, looking at the wording of the
 14 practice here, let's see if you have any other ideas.
 15 The information provided by the caller may not be
 16 related to the victims. However, when it comes to the
 17 work of the FSD, the information may serve some purpose.
 18 Let me give you an example.
 19 If perhaps the caller did not see anyone being
 20 trapped but the call was made, talking about the state
 21 of the fire, say, for example, there's a fire spreading
 22 from one building to another, the information will help
 23 the FSD; is that right?
 24 MR WONG SZE LUT: From this example, yes.
 25 MR VICTOR DAWES: However, under current guidelines, except

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<p>1 the narrow scope stated here, that is someone's trapped 2 or it is seen that someone is in great danger, unless 3 that is the case, the call will be ended. So the 4 information about the fire is not passed on to the FSD. 5 Do you think there is any room for improvement about 6 this practice? Using Wang Fuk Court as an example, we 7 know that there were calls made talking about which 8 block were alight, and the information was obtained 9 actually before the information was obtained by the FSD. 10 MR WONG SZE LUT: Well, we just saw the information. I said 11 I knew about the practice because I have heard about the 12 information. I know that there is such a practice 13 within the police. If it is relevant, the information, 14 and we have already sent officers to the scene, and if 15 there is no fruitful information gained, then the call 16 will be ended. 17 However, there are cases that I know that it's not 18 to do with a casualty but it's about useful information, 19 as the counsel said, the information was indeed passed 20 on to us. 21 MR VICTOR DAWES: If that is the case, under the guidelines 22 in black and white, that seems to be the case. 23 MR WONG SZE LUT: It seems to be the case. 24 MR VICTOR DAWES: What I'd like to explore with you is 25 whether there should be a mechanism under which useful</p>	<p>1 guidelines are not followed by the letter because the 2 operator will play by ear. 3 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right. 4 MR VICTOR DAWES: However, when it comes to a mechanism, it 5 seems that the practice has been written quite written 6 quiet rigidly, as the chairman said. 7 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes. 8 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: Well, there's nothing we can 9 do. Lawyers tend to be pedantic. But in any event, I'm 10 sure that a review will be conducted about the 11 mechanism. You will do so with police. In relation to 12 unexpected situations, perhaps there is a way to handle 13 it better. 14 MR VICTOR DAWES: Let me put it this way. I fully 15 understand what you say. We are not nitpicking or being 16 pedantic, we don't have the intention to do that. I'm 17 sure you understand that when a mechanism being put down 18 in black and white is very important. 19 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right. 20 MR VICTOR DAWES: If the mechanism renders certain 21 information not being passed to the FSD, say, for 22 example, in this fire, according to the current 23 mechanism, the information will not be passed on to the 24 FSD; this will not be ideal? 25 MR WONG SZE LUT: I agree.</p>
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<p>1 information will be passed on to the FSD? 2 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes, we will continue along this line. 3 MR VICTOR DAWES: Under the current guideline, there seems 4 to be a gap. 5 MR WONG SZE LUT: There is room for improvement. 6 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: I think it is written in too 7 narrow a scope, too rigid. 8 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right. 9 MR VICTOR DAWES: There is another issue, though. If one 10 follows the current guideline, the person deciding 11 whether the information is useful is the police? 12 MR WONG SZE LUT: According to the guideline, yes, and 13 I agree. 14 MR VICTOR DAWES: Can I put it this way: to decide whether 15 the information from the caller in relation to a fire is 16 useful or not, the most appropriate party will be the 17 FSD; right? 18 MR WONG SZE LUT: Well, to be accurate, it's the incident 19 commander. 20 MR VICTOR DAWES: Right. But the incident commander can't 21 possibly be answering phone calls. So the information 22 that the FSD can have in relation to information given 23 by the caller is important? 24 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right. 25 MR VICTOR DAWES: I do hear you that very often the</p>	<p>1 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: In general, that is correct, 2 because repeating the information may hinder the matter. 3 MR VICTOR DAWES: Perhaps we will listen to another example 4 before the break. This is C6/2463, this is a call 5 received at 3.06 pm. 6 (Audio played) 7 AUDIO RECORDING: 999 Operator: 999 call centre. 8 Caller: This is Wang Fuk Court, Wang Cheong House. 9 There is a lot of smoke. I don't know where the fire 10 is. I can't see the light at the staircase. 11 999 Operator: The fire service has already arrived 12 and tried to put out the fire. Are you in danger? Do 13 you need to be rescued? 14 Caller: I'm in the toilet. I can't go out because 15 of excessive smoke. 16 999 Operator: Do you need help from the FSD? I 17 think it's a scaffolding being on fire on the 1st floor. 18 Caller: Scaffolding on the 1st floor being on fire? 19 999 Operator: Yes. 20 Caller: I don't know. I just woke up. I just saw 21 a lot of smoke. 22 999 Operator: Just answer me, do you need rescue 23 from the firefighters? Where are you? 24 Caller: I'm in the toilet. There is a lot of smoke 25 coming in.</p>

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<p>1 999 Operator: Just answer me. Do you require 2 assistance from FS -- 3 Caller: I can't go out. 4 999 Operator: What do you mean? You are just in 5 the toilet. 6 Caller: Yes, I am in the toilet. There's too much 7 smoke at the door. Too dark, I can't see. 8 999 Operator: On what floor do you live? 9 Caller: 17th floor. 10 999 Operator: 17th floor. Do you need the fire 11 services to come to you? 12 Caller: Are they trying to put out the fire? 13 999 Operator: Yes. 14 Caller: So it's 1st floor scaffolding on fire? 15 999 Operator: Yes. 16 Caller: Okay, then I'll close all the windows. I'm 17 in the toilet. 18 999 Operator: If there is a need, call us back. 19 Caller: Okay. 20 999 Operator: Bye. 21 MR VICTOR DAWES: Let's leave the content of the 22 conversation aside. This is a call picked up by the 23 police from 999. 24 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right. 25 MR VICTOR DAWES: It was not connected to the FSD.</p>	<p>1 transfer. 2 MR VICTOR DAWES: Perhaps we will be precise. According to 3 your understanding of any guidelines, the police 4 received a call, someone was in a fire. The first thing 5 is to transfer the call to the FSD. 6 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes. 7 MR VICTOR DAWES: There was no need to talk about whether 8 the smoke was heavy and whether she could escape or not. 9 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right. 10 MR VICTOR DAWES: Do you agree with this? Perhaps sometimes 11 the caller does not know about the situation. 12 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right. 13 MR VICTOR DAWES: So the operator should not ask whether the 14 caller was in danger. 15 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right. 16 MR VICTOR DAWES: And under the guideline, of course there 17 was no guideline as to exactly what the operator should 18 do. However, the work should be transferring the call 19 to the FSD because the FSD has training received so that 20 they would know what to say to the caller, as to what 21 the caller should do; is that right? I understand that 22 these cases should not happen too often. However, these 23 cases show that perhaps that is something that actually 24 happened when they're under pressure. I'm sure you 25 understand that there is more than one example of the</p>
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<p>1 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right. 2 MR VICTOR DAWES: Well, with hindsight, we have time to 3 analyse the situation. Police said they knew that there 4 was a fire on the scaffolding on the 1st floor. 5 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes. 6 MR VICTOR DAWES: And the lady was on the 17th floor. Was 7 it the case the fire went up to the 17th floor, that's 8 why there was smoke? The call was not transferred to 9 the FSD. Does it run counter to the guideline or the 10 guideline as you understand it? 11 MR WONG SZE LUT: I have not seen the guideline. It's just 12 based on my work experience and my understanding. 13 I don't think that should be handled this way. It 14 should be transferred to us. 15 MR VICTOR DAWES: The lady said that basically she was in 16 the middle of a fire and the police knew about the fire. 17 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right. 18 MR VICTOR DAWES: We can use this as an example to identify? 19 And we see a number of problems. First, the question 20 should not be asked of the lady whether she needed the 21 firefighter to go to her because it's not a decision 22 made by her; right? 23 MR WONG SZE LUT: It depends on the situation. 24 MR VICTOR DAWES: This situation then. 25 MR WONG SZE LUT: Well, it could be done better or a direct</p>	<p>1 case we've just looked at and the way it was handled was 2 not ideal. 3 MR WONG SZE LUT: From my experience, we have never heard of 4 these cases. But in relation to this case, I do think 5 that it should not have been handled in this way. 6 MR VICTOR DAWES: Perhaps we will look into the mechanism as 7 to whether something can be done to prevent a similar 8 occurrence. If the call had been transferred to the 9 FSD, we would not know what could have happened, but in 10 this instance, the caller was not saved. So this is not 11 ideal and, I'm sure you understand, it spurs us to look 12 at whether there should be any improvement in the 13 system. 14 MR WONG SZE LUT: I understand. 15 MR VICTOR DAWES: This may be a good time. 16 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: Let's break for 10 minutes. 17 Is that enough? 18 MR VICTOR DAWES: 10 minutes. 19 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: We will break for 10 minutes. 20 (11.18 am) 21 (A short adjournment) 22 (11.28 am) 23 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: Please continue. 24 MR VICTOR DAWES: Mr Wong, I was just exploring with you the 25 challenges that the existing mechanism face, that is the</p>

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<p>1 communication between the FSD and the police. 2 Before we hear the next recording -- of course the 3 previous one was rather heavy on our hearts, but in fact 4 many calls have been dealt with swiftly and information 5 has been passed on effectively. But please understand 6 we are exploring whether there is room to improve the 7 mechanism. So inevitably we have to listen to less 8 successful calls for our analysis purpose. 9 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right. 10 MR VICTOR DAWES: Another example is a call made at 9.22 pm. 11 Please listen to the call. 12 (Audio played) 13 AUDIO RECORDING: 999 Operator: 999. 14 Caller: I am Mr Lam. There is an elderly person 15 being trapped in Tai Po, flat 2802, Wang Shing House. 16 They need urgent help. They have asthma. 17 999 Operator: Please wait. Wang Shing House, 2802? 18 Caller: Yes, flat 2802. 19 999 Operator: How many people are there? 20 Caller: Hello? I can't hear you. 21 999 Operator: How many people are there in the 22 flat? 23 Caller: I'm not sure because I'm a teacher at 24 school. A student told me that their grandpa is 25 trapped. He has asthma. I think only the grandpa is at</p>	<p>1 rather hard to convey the information to us via a call 2 or fax, so the most convenient way is to forward the 3 call to us. 4 MR VICTOR DAWES: In the end, those information given has 5 a bearing on the success of your rescue operation? 6 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes. 7 MR VICTOR DAWES: So according to the existing mechanism, 8 the call should have been forwarded to you? 9 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes, from my point of view. 10 MR VICTOR DAWES: So the operator said he would forward the 11 call to the FSD. So how does that work? According to 12 B10, page 5541, according to the log of calls, this is 13 the FSD document; is that correct? 14 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes. 15 MR VICTOR DAWES: If you look at FSA-184, and please zoom 16 in, it seems that there is a record of such a call, 17 Wang Shing House, flat 2802. If you look at the ledger, 18 we will know which flat it is. 19 Please zoom in at the heading of the columns. So it 20 means the building, the location, the gender, whether 21 there are infants or children or unknown gender, are 22 there animals, and then date and time of first 23 assistance call received by FSD. That means when the 24 FSD first received the call, the time and date, how the 25 call was received, "Call Received from", and the next</p>
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<p>1 home. 2 999 Operator: Has the student called the police? 3 Caller: I don't think so. 4 999 Operator: Okay. I will forward the call to the 5 FSD. 6 Caller: Yes, please. Thank you. 7 MR VICTOR DAWES: So, Mr Wong, concerning the issue we were 8 exploring, according to your understanding for this 9 call, should the operator forward the call immediately 10 to the FSD? 11 MR WONG SZE LUT: Not necessarily. The FSD will certainly 12 listen to the call if it was forwarded, and that's the 13 safest way to proceed. 14 MR VICTOR DAWES: That brings up an issue. Shouldn't the 15 guidelines have clear instructions on when the calls 16 should be forwarded? 17 MR WONG SZE LUT: Again, I'm not in a right position to 18 comment on the police guidelines. 19 MR VICTOR DAWES: What about from your position? Looking 20 forward, if there is a similar call, should it be 21 forwarded to the FSD immediately? 22 MR WONG SZE LUT: I think should be forwarded to us. 23 I would like to add why I think so. As I've said, to 24 convey this information to us, for example, the evacuee 25 has asthma or other medical conditions, it seems it is</p>	<p>1 column, "1st Attending Crew", which was the responding 2 crew. 3 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right. 4 MR VICTOR DAWES: And then the approximate date and time of 5 FSD attendance, which means when the case was actually 6 dealt with. 7 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes. 8 MR VICTOR DAWES: So let's come back to FSA-184. If you 9 look at the time, it's 22:11. So 15 minutes after the 10 call was received, only then did you receive the 11 information. The next column, the manner of receipt is 12 "At scene". 13 MR WONG SZE LUT: So it means that the information has been 14 received at scene, according to the record. At the 15 scene there were three mobile command units. There were 16 also residents who reported the case to us at scene. 17 MR VICTOR DAWES: So it seems the evidence points to that it 18 is not due to the call that you were referred this case, 19 or by fax; that's not the case. It seems that it is 20 through another channel, at scene, when you pick up the 21 information that there is someone trapped in the flat; 22 is that right? 23 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes, according to the record. 24 MR VICTOR DAWES: It seems that it is not through the phone 25 from where you received the information.</p>

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<p>1 MR WONG SZE LUT: Allow me to add, when we compile the 2 record, we might have received the call for assistance 3 from various channels, so we would not duplicate the 4 various channels. We would not have listed out all the 5 channels. 6 MR VICTOR DAWES: We're only speculating here, but according 7 to the documents, the time when the call for assistance 8 was first received, that should be correct. 9 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right. 10 MR VICTOR DAWES: In other words, 15 minutes after the call 11 was received, you have not received any information? 12 MR WONG SZE LUT: That may not be necessarily true. Maybe 13 we have masked the information. 14 MR VICTOR DAWES: That's exactly the point. If you look at 15 the record, the time of first receipt of the call is 16 22:11, at scene; right? 17 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes. 18 MR VICTOR DAWES: The call just now we were referring to was 19 9.22 pm, which means 15 minutes after the call was made 20 there's no record that the information has reached the 21 FSD. 22 MR WONG SZE LUT: It seems so. 23 MR VICTOR DAWES: Of course there are a lot of complicated 24 reasons. There are a large volume of calls, we 25 understand that. However, it seems that there is</p>	<p>1 are two separate institutions. During the fire, close 2 communication between the two bodies was important; 3 right? 4 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes. 5 MR VICTOR DAWES: As we said, there's room for improving the 6 mechanism, how the calls are received and transferred. 7 Can we automate the process? Say, for example, if the 8 caller is requesting help for fire services, can it be 9 made directly to your centre? 10 MR WONG SZE LUT: Usually fire would involve casualties so 11 police deployment would be required, so it might not be 12 the best way forward to forward the call directly to us. 13 Maybe the call can be forwarded directly to both 14 organisations. In other words, it will save the process 15 of forwarding the call. That's something we can 16 consider. 17 MR VICTOR DAWES: That's good or bad either way, so that's 18 something we need to explore. 19 At different places in the world there are different 20 practices. For some places, fire calls would be made to 21 a separate line. 22 MR WONG SZE LUT: I know that. 23 MR VICTOR DAWES: So can we consider that? 24 MR WONG SZE LUT: That's the Government's overriding policy. 25 We only have one emergency number for callers to call</p>
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<p>1 a communication gap between the police and the FSD. 2 There is room for improvement from how it looks. 3 MR WONG SZE LUT: Agreed. 4 MR VICTOR DAWES: Of course the call also revealed a series 5 of questions. If the call was forwarded directly to the 6 FSD, then on record it would not say received at scene 7 after 15 minutes. It should record that there is a call 8 forwarded by the police some time after 9.22 pm. 9 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right. 10 MR VICTOR DAWES: So this is what I would like to explore 11 with you. 12 Please appreciate this, that in such a large-scale 13 disaster -- we are picking bones, we are nitpicking by 14 cherry-picking calls to put to you. We understand how 15 difficult it was on that day, but actually this call, 16 the caller had been saved. He was saved in the middle 17 of the night, but he passed away afterwards. 18 Despite that, we have to appreciate that although 19 the mechanism cannot be perfect, every call is important 20 in terms of the rescue mission, so we need to improve 21 every aspect of it. 22 So taking stock of the experience, are there other 23 ways to deal with the calls? For example, we are now 24 aware that 999 calls would be received by the Police 25 Control and Command Centre and also the FSCC, so these</p>	<p>1 because it's easier to remember and the callers don't 2 have to distinguish the nature of the incidents. For 3 example, the elderly lady just now, many times the 4 callers don't know who they should call for help, the 5 police, the FSD our other emergency services. They can 6 make no distinction between them on some occasions. As 7 I mentioned, the operators might have room for 8 improvement, but I think, ordinarily speaking, the 9 police have helped us a lot. 10 MR VICTOR DAWES: I agree in most cases we wouldn't have to 11 deal with such issue. In most cases the past practice 12 should work fine. But from what we heard here, we have 13 the frontline officers from the police side, how they 14 should deal with this, how they should be trained, how 15 they should transmit information to us. It seems that 16 there is room for improvement. 17 MR WONG SZE LUT: Agreed. 18 MR VICTOR DAWES: As for what is to be done, I'm sure we all 19 understand this is professional expertise. You have 20 frontline experience. It is not to be discussed here. 21 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right. 22 MR VICTOR DAWES: Next let's talk about the 999 calls being 23 connected to the FSCC, after that what you'll do. We 24 understand that there are three steps. One, you will 25 try to find out the circumstances of those seeking</p>

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1 assistance, try to provide advice to them. Is that the
 2 case?
 3 MR WONG SZE LUT: The most simple thing is we will ask them
 4 if they are safe, and this is the most important. We
 5 will then seek basic information, sex, age, and their
 6 phone number, that is their contact method, as well as
 7 where they are. This will help FSD officers accurately
 8 have an accurate location to find them at.
 9 MR VICTOR DAWES: You will provide such advice to them if
 10 they think they need FSD officers to accompany them,
 11 you would transfer such information to frontline
 12 officers.
 13 MR WONG SZE LUT: Correct.
 14 MR VICTOR DAWES: So in a way, you won't be asking them
 15 whether they need rescue because they can't really say;
 16 right?
 17 MR WONG SZE LUT: Correct.
 18 MR VICTOR DAWES: I can see there is a mechanism that is
 19 quite effective; there is a callback mechanism. After
 20 a while, you would call people back.
 21 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes, a callback mechanism.
 22 MR VICTOR DAWES: You would have called them back.
 23 With this system, it can detect caller's addresses.
 24 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right.
 25 MR VICTOR DAWES: In paragraph 4.8 in your second witness

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1 statement, is it the case that mobile or fixed networks
 2 would also work?
 3 MR WONG SZE LUT: Should be only with fixed networks.
 4 MR VICTOR DAWES: So with -- as time changes, it is not as
 5 effective --
 6 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right.
 7 MR VICTOR DAWES: -- because we have changes in habits, and
 8 we do not have landlines in many households now.
 9 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right.
 10 MR VICTOR DAWES: So you know that it's a landline so you
 11 can detect the address from the landline number.
 12 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.
 13 MR VICTOR DAWES: Where one is, what the circumstances are,
 14 you would have to rely on information provided by one
 15 seeking assistance; right?
 16 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.
 17 MR VICTOR DAWES: Maybe we can listen to a call; A2-9, N102.
 18 We have played this earlier. Let's play this again
 19 because I want you to know which one I am referring to.
 20 (Audio played)
 21 AUDIO RECORDING: 999 Operator: 999.
 22 Caller: This is Kwong Fuk Estate. In the vicinity
 23 there is a construction site and the scaffolding is
 24 caught on fire.
 25 999 Operator: I will connect you to Fire Services

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1 Department. What is your surname?
 2 Caller: My surname is Sit.
 3 999 Operator: Did you go past the area and see all
 4 this?
 5 Caller: Let's film a video. There's a fire.
 6 999 Operator: Mister, are you looking up from the
 7 ground floor?
 8 Caller: Yes, I am riding a bicycle, driving.
 9 999 Operator: There is a fire.
 10 FSD Operator: Can't hear. Can't hear.
 11 Caller: There's a fire. Tai Po, Wang Fuk Court,
 12 there are repairs going on in the facade of the
 13 buildings and there is a fire with the scaffolding.
 14 FSD Operator: Which house is it?
 15 Caller: I don't know. I'm just passing by on
 16 a bicycle. Which house is this? Which block is this of
 17 Wang Fuk Court? Do you know which house it is? Wang
 18 Cheong House.
 19 FSD Operator: Wang Cheong House.
 20 Caller: What block is this? What is the address?
 21 The fire is so serious. Deploy officers here as soon as
 22 possible.
 23 FSD Operator: I understand. I know this. Officers
 24 have been deployed. Wang Cheong House.
 25 Caller: Is it Wang Cheong House, outside Wang

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1 Cheong House. Caller: Be quick. The fire is very
 2 serious.
 3 FSD Operator: Yes.
 4 999 Operator: Please leave a phone number.
 5 (Long beep)
 6 Caller: Please film a video. Please film a video.
 7 999 Operator: Mr Sit, don't talk about filming a
 8 video just yet. Is it at the mid floors or lower
 9 floors?
 10 Caller: It's the lower floors.
 11 999 Operator: We are coming. Okay.
 12 MR VICTOR DAWES: I think you heard he as asked which block
 13 it is.
 14 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.
 15 MR VICTOR DAWES: Whether it's on the higher floors or the
 16 lower floors where the fire broke out, how many people
 17 were trapped, how much smoke there was. That is
 18 something that should be found out, but of course there
 19 wasn't enough time to explore this in depth.
 20 I'm sure you'll agree, when someone seeking
 21 assistance, calling you, you want to know where the
 22 source of fire is.
 23 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.
 24 MR VICTOR DAWES: There are other ways for you to find out.
 25 You can rely on information provided by frontline

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<p>1 officers.</p> <p>2 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.</p> <p>3 MR VICTOR DAWES: But the first time you obtain information</p> <p>4 would be when someone makes a call.</p> <p>5 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.</p> <p>6 MR VICTOR DAWES: And when a resident wants to be rescued,</p> <p>7 it is very important to know which unit it is and which</p> <p>8 house it is because, if you go to the wrong location,</p> <p>9 you won't be able to rescue the individual.</p> <p>10 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right.</p> <p>11 MR VICTOR DAWES: So you're developing a system to allow</p> <p>12 operators to send an SMS to the one seeking assistance,</p> <p>13 to share their location --</p> <p>14 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.</p> <p>15 MR VICTOR DAWES: -- and multimedia, and this is what you</p> <p>16 mentioned in paragraph 4.8.1.</p> <p>17 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right.</p> <p>18 MR VICTOR DAWES: Can you explain your comments and what you</p> <p>19 can do at present?</p> <p>20 MR WONG SZE LUT: A lot of citizens have mobile phones now.</p> <p>21 If we can send them a link via SMS, they can click on it</p> <p>22 to share their location. Of course when they click on</p> <p>23 it, it means that they are consenting to it. They can</p> <p>24 share their locations with their mobile phones; it</p> <p>25 increases the chance of us finding them. But there are</p>	<p>1 MR VICTOR DAWES: Let's refer to the earlier example. We</p> <p>2 want to explore this because this was at the early stage</p> <p>3 of the fire and there was a passerby who saw what was</p> <p>4 happening and he could see the fire was spreading very</p> <p>5 fast. I agree with what you said. If the instructions</p> <p>6 given were not clear or they did not comply with the</p> <p>7 instructions, they were just trying to film videos, it</p> <p>8 is not ideal for your efforts.</p> <p>9 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right.</p> <p>10 MR VICTOR DAWES: If they have made a report and you can</p> <p>11 have such information disseminated very early on, it</p> <p>12 will also help you.</p> <p>13 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.</p> <p>14 MR VICTOR DAWES: And this is technically feasible?</p> <p>15 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.</p> <p>16 MR VICTOR DAWES: If you could see in the video the fire was</p> <p>17 very serious, perhaps you could deploy more officers or</p> <p>18 it would affect what equipment you bring; right?</p> <p>19 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.</p> <p>20 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: I think I would want to make</p> <p>21 a suggestion. You may have provided advice on what to</p> <p>22 do, but with some basic advice on how they can save</p> <p>23 themselves, how they can protect themselves, you can go</p> <p>24 through this system.</p> <p>25 MR WONG SZE LUT: For example, telling them how to evacuate.</p>
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<p>1 limitations. With satellite positioning or GPS</p> <p>2 positioning, we can't pinpoint specifically where in the</p> <p>3 building they are. We can only determine that they are</p> <p>4 in the building.</p> <p>5 Of course a phone can also be out of battery, that</p> <p>6 is another limitation. But within a short time --</p> <p>7 I submitted witness statement not long after -- this is</p> <p>8 what we came up with on what we could do.</p> <p>9 MR VICTOR DAWES: There is much evidence that a lot of</p> <p>10 people know -- I'm sure you know they would just make</p> <p>11 use of their phones to film videos when something</p> <p>12 happens.</p> <p>13 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.</p> <p>14 MR VICTOR DAWES: As you said, in your line of work, the</p> <p>15 first thing people say would be to film a video. Have</p> <p>16 you thought about how you could make good use of it?</p> <p>17 Because at the first instance, people would have already</p> <p>18 filmed the situation of the fire.</p> <p>19 MR WONG SZE LUT: We do want to collect such information,</p> <p>20 but there are two sides to this. It also affects the</p> <p>21 receiving of calls. We don't want them to have their</p> <p>22 attention distracted to film videos while they're making</p> <p>23 the call. But if citizens are willing to share the</p> <p>24 videos with us, we want to have a platform to collect</p> <p>25 such information.</p>	<p>1 We are already doing this.</p> <p>2 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: You can provide them with</p> <p>3 links and they can see such information?</p> <p>4 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes, they can.</p> <p>5 MR VICTOR DAWES: Another thing that I want to explore is if</p> <p>6 there is a mechanism for you to take calls and at the</p> <p>7 same time convey such information to frontline officers,</p> <p>8 this is very important, where people to be rescued are,</p> <p>9 and how serious is the fire. However, on the other</p> <p>10 hand, is there any way for us to convey the situation at</p> <p>11 the scene to the communications centre staff?</p> <p>12 I understand there are constraints. They are taking</p> <p>13 calls, they may not have the time to deal with</p> <p>14 information at the scene, but then in a way information</p> <p>15 at the scene may also affect how Communications Centre</p> <p>16 staff deal with callers' requests.</p> <p>17 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.</p> <p>18 MR VICTOR DAWES: Is there a mechanism for this? What do</p> <p>19 you do at present?</p> <p>20 MR WONG SZE LUT: At present we rely on frontline commanders</p> <p>21 or different commanding personnel. We would have</p> <p>22 commanding units at the scene. They would make use of</p> <p>23 standard messages, radio communications to tell our MCU</p> <p>24 or FSCC, and they would input the information on the</p> <p>25 computer.</p>

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<p>1 MR VICTOR DAWES: So FSCC personnel would be able to see 2 that on their screens? 3 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes, correct. 4 MR VICTOR DAWES: I suppose we don't have to play the calls. 5 With the spread of the fire from one block to another, 6 with those taking calls because the situation evolved 7 very quickly, and when they heard about it during a call 8 they were shocked. 9 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes. 10 MR VICTOR DAWES: But there should be a way to convey 11 information at the scene back to FSCC staff; right? 12 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right. But I want to add something. At 13 the scene, with the commands, we only convey information 14 of the general trend. Regarding what is specifically 15 happening at a unit, one could not say clearly. There 16 may be officers who would talk about what was happening 17 generally, whether one should leave or not, specifically 18 for someone seeking assistance, they may not be able to 19 provide such information. 20 MR VICTOR DAWES: Perhaps we can take this call, N133. 21 (Audio played) 22 AUDIO RECORDING: 999 Operator: Hello? 23 Caller: I'm on 2602, it's on fire. Can you have 24 someone rescue us? 25 999 Operator: Are you in the unit? Can you not</p>	<p>1 FSD Operator: You're in 2602 Wang Tao House? Are 2 you trapped? 3 Caller: I have some cats and dogs there. I'm 4 already here. My wife is probably also there. 5 FSD Operator: What is the phone number of your 6 wife? 7 Caller: She is not taking the calls. I've called 8 and called. No one is picking up. She didn't pick up 9 the call. 10 FSD Operator: Is there a phone in the unit? Is 11 there a residential phone number? 12 Caller: There's no residential phone number. 13 FSD Operator: Can you see at the scene there are 14 many appliances there? 15 Caller: There's only one hose. 16 FSD Operator: You see many appliances there. We 17 are trying to extinguish the fire. You don't have to 18 worry about extinguishing the fire. I'm asking if your 19 wife is trapped. We will have someone accompany them 20 down the building. 21 Caller: I'm not sure if she's there. 22 FSD Operator: You're not clear about that. Where 23 are you? 24 Caller: I am on the opposite side, where the gas 25 station is.</p>
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<p>1 come out? 2 Caller: There are several cats and dogs. 3 999 Operator: Are you in the unit? 4 Caller: I'm not in the unit. Can you deploy 5 officers there? 6 999 Operator: Mister, let me connect you to the 7 Fire Services Department. You can tell them. 8 MR VICTOR DAWES: Excuse me, please pause here. 9 This took place at 4.38 pm at Wang Tao House. You 10 can note the time and the location. 11 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes. 12 MR VICTOR DAWES: Let's skip to starting from 2 minutes. 13 (Audio played) 14 AUDIO RECORDING: FSD Operator: FSD. 15 999 Operator: Hello? Hello? 16 FSD Operator: Please speak. 17 999 Operator: He is where the fire is. 18 FSD Operator: Where are you? 19 Caller: Wang Tao House, 2602, it's on fire. Have 20 someone extinguish the fire. 21 FSD Operator: You're at Wang Tao House? It's now 22 at Wang Tao House? It was supposed to be at Wang Cheong 23 House. 24 Caller: Now they're all on fire, a few blocks. 25 They're all on fire.</p>	<p>1 FSD Operator: You are not at the scene, right? You 2 are just looking from afar? 3 Caller: Yes. 4 FSD Operator: What is the phone number of your 5 wife? 6 (Long beep) 7 Caller: Her surname is Chen. 8 FSD Operator: How old is she? 9 Caller: 60-something. 10 FSD Operator: All right. Let me call her to see 11 where she is. Please stay at a safe location. Thank 12 you. Goodbye. 13 MR VICTOR DAWES: Now, we understand that at the end, the 14 caller's wife was rescued so we have managed to save 15 her. 16 But looking at the records, we observed several 17 things. You did give an explanation earlier. You said 18 there was much confusion at the scene, and one could not 19 convey to the FSD officers clearly what was going on and 20 they didn't know other blocks were on fire, and at 21 4.38 pm the fire was already spreading fairly quickly. 22 So it seems that with communication with the centre 23 there is some room for improvement to allow officers at 24 the call centres to better help those seeking 25 assistance.</p>

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<p>1 MR WONG SZE LUT: At the beginning of the testimony, 2 I already said the director noted this. In general 3 cases we had good communication but in this situation 4 there was something wrong with the communication, which 5 is why I urge that something to be done at the scene. 6 So when I arrived at the scene, it really improved. But 7 at the time, at 4-something, I was not there yet. 8 I do admit there were such instances that FSCC staff 9 were not aware of the situation at the scene. 10 MR VICTOR DAWES: We know that ideally the FSCC staff should 11 know by 3.39 pm the fire already spread to Wang Tao 12 House and this call was made at 4.38 pm. 13 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes. 14 MR VICTOR DAWES: It seems to be a delay in messages to be 15 conveyed. 16 MR WONG SZE LUT: I don't think it is the case. This 17 particular staff member didn't know, indeed, but then 18 the information was already conveyed to FSCC then. But 19 it's perhaps hard to understand how many blocks were on 20 fire then. Because they were indoors, they were just 21 facing their computer screens. The only source they 22 have with information was just information and standard 23 messages passed on by the public as well as officers. 24 MR VICTOR DAWES: No one can possibly say that someone 25 sitting in a call centre would have exact details of</p>	<p>1 example, images to assist frontline officers, colleagues 2 at the Command Centre or the Communications Centre to do 3 their job better. I'm sure you see there is such 4 a need. 5 MR VICTOR DAWES: What I'd like to look into with you is how 6 does the FSD confirm whether the caller needs rescuing 7 and what advice is to be given. Let's look at B3, 8 page 2699. 9 This is your MC standing order. Can you explain to 10 us, this is the FSD guideline. 11 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes. 12 MR VICTOR DAWES: On page 2699 it sets out some 13 instructions. Let's look at the first paragraph: 14 "Despatch of appropriate and sufficient FS resources 15 to incidents depends very much on correct and accurate 16 incident information." 17 We understand that the -- we were looking at the 18 accuracy of the information, and the first is: 19 "Therefore, when receiving a fire/special service 20 calls, console operator must follow the standard 21 protocol below." 22 It seems that the protocol must be followed, these 23 questions must be asked. We can see the questions and 24 we can see very obviously why these questions needed to 25 be asked; right?</p>
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<p>1 what's going on at the scene because that is an 2 impossible demand; they are not at the scene. 3 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes. 4 MR VICTOR DAWES: Let's go to B10, page 5515. Please bear 5 with me. We need to locate the page number. 6 It should be page 5515. I'm sure you are very 7 familiar with the document. It is an incident log. 8 Let's look at 15:39:45. The FSCC colleagues should be 9 able to see this from the screen. 10 MR WONG SZE LUT: There are many different screens. If this 11 is to be looked at, it will have to be called up and it 12 cannot be done instantly. 13 MR VICTOR DAWES: That means there is no screen showing 14 information about the fire at the scene that enables the 15 operator to deal with the call for assistance? 16 MR WONG SZE LUT: There is no such information that they can 17 see. 18 MR VICTOR DAWES: I understand. This is something that we 19 can explore. We all agree that information about the 20 scene will help colleagues at the call centre to handle 21 calls for assistance. Do you think there is a better 22 way to communicate the information? 23 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes. Let me supplement. When we're 24 looking into new technologies, we hope that we want to 25 make use of information and technology, say, for</p>	<p>1 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right. 2 MR VICTOR DAWES: Of course common sense will be applied and 3 experience will be tapped into. You may not follow the 4 order, but you have to gather the information. 5 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right. 6 MR VICTOR DAWES: There is another document. It's 7 paragraph 4.3 in your second witness statement; you talk 8 about a temporary operational guideline. It's B3/2709. 9 It says here "Departmental line-to-take for callback 10 mechanism." 11 It says: 12 "The safety advice to be given will vary on 13 a case-by-case basis. The following departmental 14 line-to-take shall be deemed as some references during 15 callbacks." 16 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes. 17 MR VICTOR DAWES: This basically says there's a guideline in 18 a callback call, as to what questions are to be asked. 19 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right. 20 MR VICTOR DAWES: We can see why these questions have to be 21 asked; it's logical and obvious. These questions help 22 the persons in the incident to protect themselves and to 23 seek help. 24 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes. 25 MR VICTOR DAWES: Under F, as we have heard from many</p>

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<p>1 residents, they know the evacuation three treasures will 2 have to be brought along. They were aware of or they 3 were told by your colleagues. 4 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right. 5 MR VICTOR DAWES: Let's look at the procedures or steps. 6 When they're asked if they're safe, if they were 7 safe, then they should stay there to wait for rescue and 8 do not leave without good reason, otherwise, there may 9 be danger. Right? 10 MR WONG SZE LUT: Let me say that this is only for reference 11 only, they were not required to say these lines one by 12 one. The point under (a) is to ask if the person was 13 safe because that's our prime concern. So we need to 14 ask if the person is safe. As to whether that person is 15 to stay put, it depends on whether there is a chance for 16 them to leave. 17 MR VICTOR DAWES: We fully understand that the guidelines 18 should not be blindly followed, but when they asked you 19 whether that you are safe or not, they will not be able 20 to give you an accurate answer. You seem to tell us 21 that the prime concern is to ascertain their safety, but 22 what (a) says is true, if they are safe, then 23 they should not leave without good reason, otherwise 24 there will be danger. 25 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes. They will be asked not to rush to</p>	<p>1 killed by the fire but through inhalation of smoke. 2 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right. 3 MR VICTOR DAWES: So if there is smoke, the guiding 4 principle is to stay put, and if there is no smoke they 5 should try to leave. 6 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right. 7 MR VICTOR DAWES: I understand that is the general practice. 8 It seems that the advice given by some colleagues has 9 deviated from this. We understand that it should not be 10 too rigid, it's not set in stone, but we've heard 11 examples that not much instructions or advice was given 12 to the callers to help them protect themselves. For 13 example, Wang Cheong unit 502, N012. I'm not going to 14 play the recording again because we've all heard it and 15 we don't want to repeatedly hear the recording. 16 But the FSCC did not ask whether there was smoke 17 outside or whether there was any way for them to leave 18 the unit. That's something we know. It seems from what 19 you said that that has deviated from the directions 20 given to colleagues. 21 MR WONG SZE LUT: That is not the case. Let me explain to 22 you about our understanding of the two documents. Let's 23 please go to the first one, that is our general order, 24 the MC standing order. 25 MR VICTOR DAWES: Page 2699.</p>
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<p>1 leave and they will be asked to check to see if there is 2 any smoke in the staircase or corridor. If not, then 3 they should try to go to the ground floor because if 4 it's safe, they should try to go to the ground floor. 5 That will be our advice, if that is possible. 6 However, the subsequent ones are talking about what 7 should happen if they cannot leave. 8 MR VICTOR DAWES: We see that there are samples, lots of 9 smoke outside and there are residents who have decided 10 to stay inside, to close the door and seal the gaps with 11 tape or wet towels. 12 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right. 13 MR VICTOR DAWES: And then it talks about waiting to be -- 14 hanging towels or bed sheets at the window or the 15 balconies so that FS officers can see you. 16 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right. 17 MR VICTOR DAWES: And then it talks about if there is no 18 smoke in the corridor, then they should go. 19 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right. 20 MR VICTOR DAWES: And E talks about crawling on the floor, F 21 talks about the evacuation three treasures. 22 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right. 23 MR VICTOR DAWES: In paragraph 4.3.2 in your statement, it 24 seems that the guiding principle is to avoid inhalation 25 of smoke because very often people were not hurt or</p>	<p>1 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes. This is a procedure for receiving 2 calls. That means when someone calls about a fire or 3 calls to say that they're trapped, then this will be 4 followed, the questions will be asked. The temporary 5 guideline is the script of a callback. So when calls 6 are received, advice about what they should do will not 7 be given. I believe that the recording played was when 8 a call was received. 9 MR VICTOR DAWES: I understand you. What I'm trying to say 10 is that that exactly is the problem. When a call is 11 received, I do understand that you need to obtain the 12 information set out on page 2699. 13 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right. 14 MR VICTOR DAWES: But, according to what you said, when a 15 call was received and you knew that someone was trapped, 16 then the information under the callback mechanism would 17 not be given. 18 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right. 19 MR VICTOR DAWES: That is about escape, about how to protect 20 themselves or advice to leave. It seems that it was not 21 given during the first call. 22 MR WONG SZE LUT: Not necessarily. But if there are doubts, 23 say, for example, they were told that there was smoke, 24 then the colleague would tell them directly what to do. 25 But for safety, then they would say, "Please hold, we</p>

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1 will send someone to come to you".

2 MR VICTOR DAWES: We understand. You were shown two

3 documents. The second one is in relation to the

4 callback mechanism.

5 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.

6 MR VICTOR DAWES: You already have the information obtained

7 during the first call, during a callback. You asked to

8 see if there was any update, whether the fire got more

9 serious and if there was any additional information.

10 The second step is to teach them how to protect

11 themselves.

12 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.

13 MR VICTOR DAWES: But I do agree it depends on the

14 situation. During the first call, if necessary, advice

15 will be given as to what they need to do.

16 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.

17 MR VICTOR DAWES: But more often than not, here, the

18 recordings, a lot of the calls, say the calls in

19 Wang Fuk Court, a lot of residents were trapped inside

20 their flats. The operator should refer to the callback

21 mechanism script, that is, the advice to be given to

22 people who are trapped, should they be told that?

23 MR WONG SZE LUT: Not necessarily. It depends.

24 The callback mechanism is something new in recent

25 years, that is a call would be made to them to tell them

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1 what to do and to update their location. As we see from

2 Wang Fuk Court, a lot of residents have gone somewhere

3 else so calls will have to be made to them again.

4 Before there was the callback mechanism guideline,

5 colleagues would give advice to the callers. It's just

6 that not all scripts will be put in the MCSO.

7 This is a standing order. The callback one is

8 a temporary one because it was still on trial. If it's

9 proved to be effective, then it will be put into a

10 standing order, but it doesn't mean that our colleagues

11 would not do it.

12 MR VICTOR DAWES: Okay. Let's listen to this 012 -- N012.

13 (Audio played)

14 AUDIO RECORDING: 999 Operator: 999. Anything you need to

15 help?

16 Caller: Fire at Wang Cheong House.

17 999 Operator: We will pass you to FSD.

18 (Calling tone)

19 Caller: Yes. There is a lot of smoke, a lot of

20 smoke over there.

21 999 Operator: Do you know which floor it is?

22 Caller: It's happening now.

23 999 Operator: Do you know on which floor?

24 Caller: Downstairs. I came from downstairs.

25 999 Operator: Which floor? Do you know?

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1 Caller: I don't know. I'm at home.

2 999 Operator: Are you safe?

3 Caller: The smoke has gone into the flat.

4 999 Operator: Smoke has gone into the flat.

5 Caller: Yes, yes.

6 999 Operator: What's your family name?

7 Caller: I am a helper. I live with an elderly

8 lady.

9 999 Operator: What's your telephone number?

10 (Long beep)

11 Please hold. The ambulance man will ask you

12 specifically what's happening.

13 You are Wang Cheong House, Wang Fuk Court, right?

14 Caller: Yes, yes, yes.

15 999 Operator: I can tell you the fire service is

16 rushing over. Please hold. You will be asked questions

17 by firefighters.

18 (Calling tone)

19 Caller: It's not picked up. I'm calling.

20 FSD Operator: Fire services.

21 999 Operator: It is the fire at Wang Fuk Court.

22 FSD Operator: How can we help you?

23 Caller: There's a fire Wang Fuk Court, Wang Cheong

24 House.

25 FSD Operator: There is a fire at Wang Cheong House.

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1 Caller: Yes.

2 FSD Operator: Fire engines are going to Wang Cheong

3 House. Do you need firemen to come to help you leave?

4 Caller: Yes. It's just me and an elderly lady at

5 home.

6 FSD Operator: Yes. You need firefighters to come

7 pick you up?

8 Caller: Yes.

9 FSD Operator: What's your current location?

10 Caller: Unit 502.

11 FSD Operator: 502?

12 Caller: 502.

13 FSD Operator: How many of you are there?

14 (Long beep)

15 How many of you are there?

16 Caller: Me and an elderly lady.

17 FSD Operator: two ladies, right?

18 Caller: Right.

19 FSD Operator: How old are you?

20 Caller: I'm 39.

21 FSD Operator: 39, a woman. And the other one? How

22 old is she?

23 Caller: An elderly lady, 98.

24 FSD Operator: 98. Can you see fire and smoke?

25 Caller: Yes. The fire is fierce.

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1 FSD Operator: Has the fire reached you?
 2 Caller: Not at the moment but the smoke is dense.
 3 FSD Operator: I understand. Are you safe?
 4 Caller: So far I'm all right.
 5 FSD Operator: Do you need firemen to come to rescue
 6 you?
 7 Caller: Yes. I'm very scared.
 8 FSD Operator: I understand. Please rest assured the
 9 firemen will come to locate you. Thank you.
 10 MR VICTOR DAWES: I understand that not every call is
 11 handled perfectly. We are looking at what guidelines to
 12 give to operators. We understand the guidelines under
 13 the callback mechanism. Page 2709, bundle B3. I agree
 14 with you it's a guideline for a callback, but do you
 15 agree that depending on the situation, when there is
 16 a call for assistance, if you know that that person is
 17 in the fire, during the first call, advice should be
 18 given instead of waiting for a callback, that is very
 19 important?
 20 MR WONG SZE LUT: If it's handled well -- of course our
 21 colleagues will have to gauge two things: to keep the
 22 caller on the phone to provide as much information as
 23 possible, would that be better than arranging for
 24 frontline officers to go to help them? It's a dilemma.
 25 Of course, looking at it with hindsight, our colleague

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1 could do better. It would be good to provide all
 2 information, but that is not necessary. There should be
 3 flexibility. But basic information should be given so
 4 that time will be allotted to sending of frontline
 5 officers to save them.
 6 MR VICTOR DAWES: Yes, I understand. The information
 7 obtained from a call will be put into a system?
 8 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes, put into a system.
 9 MR VICTOR DAWES: It will not be passed on verbally.
 10 MR WONG SZE LUT: That too. After putting the information
 11 in the system, information will be passed on using
 12 a radio, basic information, in particular location.
 13 There is also a mechanism that is triggered. When
 14 information is passed on, the frontline firefighter may
 15 not remember, so there is another mechanism, it's an FSD
 16 messenger; it's an internal instant messaging service.
 17 MR VICTOR DAWES: Well, it seems to be something like
 18 WhatsApp, according to the record.
 19 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.
 20 MR VICTOR DAWES: But it's a record with the FSD.
 21 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes, the information is put into the
 22 system and it can be accessed via a mobile phone. When
 23 the mobile command unit has arrived, there will be
 24 printout made for the rescue leaders to use when they
 25 carry out the operation. So the operators may have to

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1 communicate with frontline officers directly.
 2 MR VICTOR DAWES: In other words, it depends on the
 3 experience and judgment of the operator but it seems
 4 that from the guidelines, during a callback, when advice
 5 is to be given, that is absent in guidelines in relation
 6 to first calls. So it depends on the habit of the
 7 person.
 8 MR WONG SZE LUT: No, that is not a habit. Even if you ask
 9 me now, I don't think that should be written too rigidly
 10 in black and white. It depends on the situation. All
 11 our colleagues know about the steps. They've received
 12 training. They know that it should be given. And if
 13 the caller asks for advice, it will be given. But the
 14 operator should also gauge as to whether the caller
 15 should be kept on the phone or to pass the information
 16 to frontline officers. There's also a lot of things
 17 that are absent, for example, how to calm someone down,
 18 say, "Just take things slowly, we are on our way", but
 19 it's not written in the guideline.
 20 MR VICTOR DAWES: But some people are doing it better.
 21 MR WONG SZE LUT: That is true but it cannot be rigidly
 22 written because some people would think after they have
 23 gone through the script, that will do. They are not
 24 gramophones. They are not just to read out a script.
 25 Even if you ask me now, I do not think that should be

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1 written.
 2 MR VICTOR DAWES: I'm not trying to be pedantic here.
 3 Writing the guidelines in black and white for frontline
 4 officers or making hard and fast rules, these are two
 5 different things; right?
 6 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.
 7 MR VICTOR DAWES: I appreciate your answer but still I want
 8 to ask you the question. There is no written guideline
 9 for the console operator giving safety advice to the
 10 caller. You said the reason is that the operator has to
 11 make a judgment and even though this is not written in
 12 black and white, but as a matter of fact, according to
 13 the training received by the operators, they would know
 14 this has to be done?
 15 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.
 16 MR VICTOR DAWES: I will not dwell on the call. I think we
 17 all agree there is much room for improvement in
 18 retrospect, but I would like to explore another area
 19 with you.
 20 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right.
 21 MR VICTOR DAWES: To summarise your evidence, from the
 22 temporary operational guideline, the safety advice for
 23 callers, according to your understanding, sometimes
 24 these safety advice would have been given to the caller
 25 on the first occasion.

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<p>1 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right.</p> <p>2 MR VICTOR DAWES: It's just that the examples we have heard</p> <p>3 do not include them and there are reasons behind the</p> <p>4 operator not doing so.</p> <p>5 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right.</p> <p>6 MR VICTOR DAWES: And we have to rely on the experience of</p> <p>7 the call receivers. It will not work if we put the</p> <p>8 requirements in black and white as a rigid rule because</p> <p>9 if you ask the caller whether they are safe, very often</p> <p>10 they cannot answer you.</p> <p>11 MR WONG SZE LUT: Correct.</p> <p>12 MR VICTOR DAWES: That's the case for most callers from</p> <p>13 Wang Fuk Court.</p> <p>14 MR WONG SZE LUT: Correct.</p> <p>15 MR VICTOR DAWES: So the communication gap between the</p> <p>16 command centre and the frontline officers, as you have</p> <p>17 agreed previously, taking stock of the experience, there</p> <p>18 is some delay about the communication between the</p> <p>19 frontline and the command centre. There is an example,</p> <p>20 I believe you would remember that too, according to</p> <p>21 Mr Chan Hing Yung, the Deputy Director of the Fire</p> <p>22 Services Department, at 16:10 on that day he confirmed</p> <p>23 with Mr Lam Ho Chun, the divisional officer at the</p> <p>24 scene, to confirm that evacuation has to be conducted</p> <p>25 for all eight blocks.</p>	<p>1 MR VICTOR DAWES: Let's take it step by step. I want to be</p> <p>2 fair with you.</p> <p>3 Firstly, 16:10 evacuation is decided. Has the</p> <p>4 message been immediately conveyed to the console</p> <p>5 operators at the command centre?</p> <p>6 MR WONG SZE LUT: According to my understanding, yes.</p> <p>7 MR VICTOR DAWES: So all of them knew?</p> <p>8 MR WONG SZE LUT: Well, not necessarily. As I've said, the</p> <p>9 message was sent back to the command centre. One of the</p> <p>10 colleagues would have input the data into the computer</p> <p>11 system.</p> <p>12 MR VICTOR DAWES: So if the console operators did not check</p> <p>13 the system --</p> <p>14 MR WONG SZE LUT: They would not know.</p> <p>15 MR VICTOR DAWES: Do you think that's problematic? I'm</p> <p>16 asking you whether it is problematic.</p> <p>17 MR WONG SZE LUT: I don't think there is a problem.</p> <p>18 MR VICTOR DAWES: So you think the call receivers were not</p> <p>19 aware of the evacuation process at 16:10 is not</p> <p>20 problematic?</p> <p>21 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right.</p> <p>22 MR VICTOR DAWES: Why?</p> <p>23 MR WONG SZE LUT: If our colleagues had to be made aware of</p> <p>24 every step of the operation and the details, it would</p> <p>25 pose more obstacles to the task. They should have focus</p>
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<p>1 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.</p> <p>2 MR VICTOR DAWES: You are also aware of that?</p> <p>3 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.</p> <p>4 MR VICTOR DAWES: But if you listen to the 999 call, how the</p> <p>5 message was conveyed to the residents, it seems that the</p> <p>6 calls did not reflect this decision made by the command;</p> <p>7 do you agree?</p> <p>8 MR WONG SZE LUT: I don't quite follow you.</p> <p>9 MR VICTOR DAWES: Listening to calls made after 16:10, of</p> <p>10 course the FSD colleagues gave advice to the residents.</p> <p>11 At 16:10 it was decided that all eight blocks had to</p> <p>12 be evacuated.</p> <p>13 MR WONG SZE LUT: Okay.</p> <p>14 MR VICTOR DAWES: This information was crucial for the</p> <p>15 callers.</p> <p>16 MR WONG SZE LUT: Not necessarily. If evacuation had to be</p> <p>17 conducted, I can imagine that our operators are aware of</p> <p>18 this information. But whether they tell the evacuees</p> <p>19 there is an evacuation going on would not affect our</p> <p>20 operation.</p> <p>21 MR VICTOR DAWES: Do you mean that at 16:10 the deputy</p> <p>22 director decided that evacuation has to be done for</p> <p>23 eight blocks, this message does not have to be conveyed</p> <p>24 to the callers?</p> <p>25 MR WONG SZE LUT: I'm not saying that.</p>	<p>1 on their task, that is to obtain information and pass</p> <p>2 the information on to the frontline rather than</p> <p>3 understanding what the frontline is doing, not to</p> <p>4 mention convey all the operational details to the</p> <p>5 callers.</p> <p>6 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: Can we put it like this: even</p> <p>7 if there is an evacuation order, the console operator</p> <p>8 would not ask the caller to leave immediately since it</p> <p>9 is dangerous?</p> <p>10 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right.</p> <p>11 MR VICTOR DAWES: I agree. But there are different</p> <p>12 interpretations to your answer so I would like to be</p> <p>13 fair with you.</p> <p>14 From your answer, it seems that you are saying that</p> <p>15 you don't think that this decision would affect the</p> <p>16 message conveyed to the callers given by the console</p> <p>17 operators?</p> <p>18 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.</p> <p>19 MR VICTOR DAWES: So despite the message has been entered</p> <p>20 into your system, there is no measure to ensure that the</p> <p>21 callers are aware of that?</p> <p>22 MR WONG SZE LUT: We don't think that's necessary and also</p> <p>23 the colleagues at the centre do not need to know every</p> <p>24 detail at the frontline.</p> <p>25 MR VICTOR DAWES: I agree, and that's impossible.</p>

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<p>1 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right.</p> <p>2 MR VICTOR DAWES: But if this message would affect how they</p> <p>3 deal with the calls, they should be made aware of that.</p> <p>4 MR WONG SZE LUT: It's hard to interpret what's important</p> <p>5 and not important.</p> <p>6 MR VICTOR DAWES: I think you are in a better position to</p> <p>7 say that than me.</p> <p>8 MR WONG SZE LUT: Well, I don't think they should be</p> <p>9 distracted to learn about what's happening at the scene</p> <p>10 because there are colleagues handling the situation at</p> <p>11 the scene. Their tasks are just passing on the calls.</p> <p>12 MR VICTOR DAWES: I agree they cannot spend every moment</p> <p>13 learning about the realtime situation.</p> <p>14 MR WONG SZE LUT: And also let's say if there's full</p> <p>15 evacuation ongoing, I can't imagine how the colleague</p> <p>16 could tell the caller what actions they should or should</p> <p>17 not have done. It would not affect the information</p> <p>18 given by the operators. For example, if there is a full</p> <p>19 evacuation, the operator would not say to the caller,</p> <p>20 "Just stay put and don't be nervous, evacuation is</p> <p>21 ongoing". Nor would they tell the caller to leave</p> <p>22 immediately along with the evacuation.</p> <p>23 So of course, if there is time, the call receivers</p> <p>24 can spend some time to learn about the situation, but</p> <p>25 that's not necessary.</p>	<p>1 like to give you an opportunity to explain this to us.</p> <p>2 If at 16:10 evacuation order has been made for all eight</p> <p>3 blocks, if this information had been passed on to the</p> <p>4 console operators, that they should give safety advice</p> <p>5 to those residents in unaffected buildings that</p> <p>6 they should leave immediately rather than staying put,</p> <p>7 it could have helped some residents. If you don't</p> <p>8 agree, why?</p> <p>9 MR WONG SZE LUT: I don't agree. When an evacuation order</p> <p>10 is in place -- I might not be the one at the best</p> <p>11 position to explain because there are commander at</p> <p>12 scene, but evacuation order is more than just asking</p> <p>13 someone to leave. Our colleagues would go upstairs and</p> <p>14 knock on the door. When a situation allows, we ask them</p> <p>15 to leave. If not, we take them away. For many cases,</p> <p>16 even when evacuees have left, say, for example, in</p> <p>17 Wang Fuk Court, one building, I would not name the</p> <p>18 building, it is greatly saddened that a lot of deceased</p> <p>19 were found in common areas. So if our console operators</p> <p>20 disregarded the situation at the scene and ask everyone</p> <p>21 who called them to leave, even though there is an</p> <p>22 evacuation order in full progress, it would not be</p> <p>23 appropriate to ask our colleagues to tell that to the</p> <p>24 callers. We don't know what the situation is like</p> <p>25 outside their doors. That's not something we would do.</p>
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<p>1 THE HON MR CHAN KIN-POR: Mr Wong, I would like to confirm</p> <p>2 this with you. We have spent quite some time on this</p> <p>3 question. Do you think it would be better or worse if</p> <p>4 the call receiver passed on this information? We have</p> <p>5 to know what's the value of this information. You are</p> <p>6 the professional here. You are saying that there would</p> <p>7 not be a lot of benefits, but what about the downsides?</p> <p>8 MR WONG SZE LUT: There would be more disadvantages than</p> <p>9 advantages.</p> <p>10 MR VICTOR DAWES: So can we end this discussion here. First</p> <p>11 of all, the call centre operator might not know this</p> <p>12 information and you don't think that it is necessary for</p> <p>13 them to know this information.</p> <p>14 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right.</p> <p>15 MR VICTOR DAWES: But the big question here is the fire</p> <p>16 spread to different buildings at different time points,</p> <p>17 and 16:10 is a rather early point of time. So there are</p> <p>18 some unaffected buildings at that point of time and</p> <p>19 there might have been ways to ask the residents in those</p> <p>20 not yet affected buildings to leave?</p> <p>21 We appreciate you are the expert here but the public</p> <p>22 has a question, that if we could evacuate residents in</p> <p>23 the unaffected buildings earlier, then more lives could</p> <p>24 have been saved. Of course there are other issues like</p> <p>25 the FAS has been switched off and so on, but I would</p>	<p>1 As a professional, even if there is an evacuation</p> <p>2 order given by the director, we would not ask the</p> <p>3 console operators to ask everyone to leave immediately.</p> <p>4 Even if the director tells me that, I will say no to</p> <p>5 him.</p> <p>6 MR VICTOR DAWES: I think no one is doubting whether the</p> <p>7 call receiver should tell the callers to leave</p> <p>8 immediately, disregard everything, at 16:10. But what</p> <p>9 you said is that the evacuation order should not have</p> <p>10 affected the decision made by the console operators.</p> <p>11 These are two different things; you agree?</p> <p>12 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.</p> <p>13 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: If the call receiver</p> <p>14 misunderstood the message and told the callers to leave,</p> <p>15 it would be even more dangerous.</p> <p>16 MR WONG SZE LUT: Correct.</p> <p>17 MR VICTOR DAWES: At the time -- and we are not saying that</p> <p>18 the operator should ask the callers to leave anyway.</p> <p>19 Special advice should have been given to the callers,</p> <p>20 for example, Wang Chi House is not affected, so we</p> <p>21 advise you to leave. Is that not considered suitable?</p> <p>22 MR WONG SZE LUT: We would not give such instruction to our</p> <p>23 colleagues at the command centre. The colleagues would</p> <p>24 be asked to make a judgment themselves. We would try to</p> <p>25 ask the callers to leave, if possible, but it depends on</p>

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1 the situation. So whether our colleagues knew of the
 2 evacuation order does not matter because they would
 3 still ask the callers whether they could leave and
 4 whether there was smoke.
 5 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: We understand that, but
 6 please understand why we are asking these questions.
 7 MR WONG SZE LUT: I understand.
 8 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: We don't have the fire alarm
 9 activated on this occasion, so for Wang Chi House
 10 residents, they remained all along, so it is just
 11 fortunate that the fire did not spread to Wang Chi
 12 House.
 13 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right.
 14 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: If Wang Chi House also caught
 15 fire, then the residents might have died because of late
 16 evacuation.
 17 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right.
 18 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: So we are now trying to
 19 explore, that's when the evacuation order is in place,
 20 it does not mean that we want to ask everyone to leave
 21 immediately. That's very dangerous, because situations
 22 are different for all eight buildings.
 23 MR WONG SZE LUT: Correct.
 24 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: For the buildings where the
 25 fire did not spread to yet, was there another way to

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1 deal with those calls? It is fortunate that Wang Chi
 2 House did not catch fire, otherwise many more might have
 3 died.
 4 MR WONG SZE LUT: Understood, chairman. I know that our
 5 colleagues have considered that, but it would be
 6 inappropriate to put it in the guidelines for our
 7 colleagues.
 8 MR VICTOR DAWES: In other words, your judgment is -- you
 9 are saying that the judgment should have been made by
 10 the frontline officers and the operators.
 11 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right.
 12 MR VICTOR DAWES: So let's move to another area about the
 13 communication method. If you look at the workflow,
 14 B3/2704. This is the temporary operational guidelines
 15 dated 29 November 2024. It is a temporary workflow, as
 16 the name suggests.
 17 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.
 18 MR VICTOR DAWES: There is "Standard Procedure for Receiving
 19 FS Assistance Calls", some of which we have talked
 20 about.
 21 On the next page there are some examples showing us
 22 the interface.
 23 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.
 24 MR VICTOR DAWES: I believe you are well aware of this
 25 workflow.

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1 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.
 2 MR VICTOR DAWES: Not every one of us has had the
 3 opportunity to study your witness statement, so can you
 4 please summarise the information for us?
 5 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes. Please scroll upward. Item 1. This
 6 is the callback mechanism.
 7 Please scroll up a bit more. Yes, correct. This is
 8 the workflow for us when a large number of calls are
 9 received, that is the mechanism for disbursing
 10 informing. So usually, this would be activated when we
 11 have received more than four calls. We ask the callers
 12 for their basic information, their whereabouts, gender,
 13 age and contact phone number, then we would enter the
 14 data into our dispatch system for record. At the same
 15 time, the operators would communicate the information to
 16 our frontline officers through different methods, for
 17 example radio, and also our internal platform, that is
 18 FSD messenger. The operator would not type in the
 19 message in the messenger. They will just take
 20 a snapshot of the interface on the next page.
 21 There are a lot of abbreviations, meaning different
 22 things. So through the FSD messenger, the snapshot
 23 would be sent to the frontline firefighters. They can
 24 see it through their phone. So the mobile command units
 25 will also print out a record for the commander for

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1 handing out to firefighters to save the evacuees.
 2 MR VICTOR DAWES: Now, paragraph 1.2, page 2707, first of
 3 all, the information would be entered into the CMS, and
 4 then through the FSD messenger, the snapshot would be
 5 sent. So will all frontline firefighters receive the
 6 FSD message?
 7 MR WONG SZE LUT: Not all of them. All fire officers above
 8 the grade of assistant divisional officer would be given
 9 a phone installed with the software. The colleagues on
 10 the mobile command unit, the commander-in-chief and the
 11 deputy commander, would also have the phones.
 12 MR VICTOR DAWES: So the phones would only be given to those
 13 commanders?
 14 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right.
 15 MR VICTOR DAWES: Page 2708. How the message is
 16 communicated to the frontline firefighters, it seems
 17 that there would be a messenger board at the scene and
 18 the message would be copied on the board in this format.
 19 MR WONG SZE LUT: So the information board is inside the
 20 mobile command unit. It's not a physical board.
 21 MR VICTOR DAWES: It's a computer screen.
 22 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.
 23 MR VICTOR DAWES: So the CMS order, if you look at B5/4368,
 24 this is a snapshot of the CMS interface.
 25 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.

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1 MR VICTOR DAWES: So it says "1st FS assistance 2F" -- that
 2 means two females?
 3 MR WONG SZE LUT: Correct.
 4 MR VICTOR DAWES: Room 2703, the number of the caller.
 5 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.
 6 MR VICTOR DAWES: So this is I believe what one typed after
 7 instructions were obtained.
 8 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.
 9 MR VICTOR DAWES: And a staff member will open a case and
 10 input such information.
 11 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.
 12 MR VICTOR DAWES: Please refer to paragraph 4.7 of the
 13 second witness statement. At the time, there were
 14 repeated requests for assistance and you said here there
 15 is a large volume of duplicated calls.
 16 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.
 17 MR VICTOR DAWES: We understand one may have called multiple
 18 times or their family might have made calls as well.
 19 I'm sure you understand.
 20 MR WONG SZE LUT: We very much understand.
 21 MR VICTOR DAWES: And if we look at B5/4368, you can see
 22 here, in understanding -- so at 15:01 you can see at the
 23 upper right-hand corner --
 24 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.
 25 MR VICTOR DAWES: -- that was when the request for

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1 assistance was received. The room was 2703 Wang Cheong
 2 House and there were two females; right?
 3 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right.
 4 MR VICTOR DAWES: If we look at page 4369, this is what you
 5 said, the FSD app?
 6 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes, it's the computer interface.
 7 MR VICTOR DAWES: Yes. It's like WhatsApp but computer
 8 version, essentially.
 9 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.
 10 MR VICTOR DAWES: And one can see this on a mobile phone as
 11 well?
 12 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.
 13 MR VICTOR DAWES: And if you look at page 4370, please. If
 14 you look at page 4370, you can see it is an example you
 15 mentioned, two females, and this was received by the FSD
 16 at 16:02.
 17 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.
 18 MR VICTOR DAWES: It's exactly the same request.
 19 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.
 20 MR VICTOR DAWES: But it is seen as a new request for
 21 assistance.
 22 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.
 23 MR VICTOR DAWES: We do understand that was a problem faced
 24 that day.
 25 MR WONG SZE LUT: We noted this situation and we have

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1 implemented measures in response to this.
 2 MR VICTOR DAWES: Consolidating the information available,
 3 so the FSD, through the FSD messenger, issued 600
 4 requests for assistance.
 5 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.
 6 MR VICTOR DAWES: But in the end only 309 requests were
 7 confirmed. It seems that there was quite a situation.
 8 MR WONG SZE LUT: There were 347 addresses.
 9 MR VICTOR DAWES: The number of cases is 309.
 10 MR WONG SZE LUT: I'm not sure, but it should be that
 11 number.
 12 MR VICTOR DAWES: And you can see there is serious
 13 duplication here.
 14 MR WONG SZE LUT: Correct.
 15 MR VICTOR DAWES: We do note there is a problem and you are
 16 considering solutions. We have almost double the calls,
 17 being duplicate calls. What did the frontline officers
 18 do then?
 19 MR WONG SZE LUT: Before the mobile command units arrived,
 20 the FSCC staff were busy receiving such calls. They
 21 immediately inputted such information on their computers
 22 to have such information conveyed to the frontline and
 23 the frontline did receive much repeated information. On
 24 deployment, that may have some impact. I will wait for
 25 the assistant director to give more information.

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1 MR VICTOR DAWES: It may be the case that we don't know
 2 officers were already dealing with some of the cases.
 3 There is duplication of resource allocation.
 4 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right.
 5 MR VICTOR DAWES: I note in paragraph 4.7.3 you were
 6 exploring system upgrades to prevent the same incident
 7 or caller from being counted multiple times.
 8 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.
 9 MR VICTOR DAWES: If we look at the FSD messenger, according
 10 to general understanding, it works just like a messaging
 11 application.
 12 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.
 13 MR VICTOR DAWES: Is it the case that for each request for
 14 assistance, there will be a new group? Can you explain
 15 how the group operates?
 16 MR WONG SZE LUT: When there is an incident, we would have
 17 a group created.
 18 MR VICTOR DAWES: So for the Wang Fuk Court incident, there
 19 was only one group?
 20 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes. And for FS assistance, FSA requests,
 21 they were all put up here.
 22 MR VICTOR DAWES: And you can see, as you said earlier, this
 23 is a computer interface.
 24 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.
 25 MR VICTOR DAWES: It may be different from the interface on

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1 mobile.
 2 MR WONG SZE LUT: It's generally the same. It's just that
 3 the left columns are not there. It would just work like
 4 WhatsApp.
 5 MR VICTOR DAWES: Yes. We can see WhatsApp on computer
 6 version would have similar information.
 7 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right.
 8 MR VICTOR DAWES: And we can see the most important
 9 information would be there?
 10 MR WONG SZE LUT: The most important would actually be the
 11 images.
 12 MR VICTOR DAWES: And from the screenshots, is it the case
 13 999 or those picking up the calls after they have
 14 transferred the calls to FSD, they would make use of
 15 some sort of equipment or their phones to capture the
 16 screen of the system and then would send the image just
 17 like what we do on WhatsApp?
 18 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.
 19 MR VICTOR DAWES: And one would have to click on it to
 20 expand the image?
 21 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.
 22 MR VICTOR DAWES: So if one has already inputted such
 23 information into the system, it seems that the system of
 24 the FSD messenger and the Fire Services Department are
 25 separate.

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1 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right.
 2 MR VICTOR DAWES: Which is why one has to capture the screen
 3 of the computer to send this information.
 4 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.
 5 MR VICTOR DAWES: If that is the case, we have seen rapid
 6 advancement of technology, there are probably better
 7 solutions. If we have an image for each case, frontline
 8 officers would have to look -- fight fire while also
 9 clicking on the images to expand the images.
 10 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.
 11 MR VICTOR DAWES: There is no connection between the
 12 systems; right?
 13 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right.
 14 MR VICTOR DAWES: This is something you'll explore on what
 15 to improve on.
 16 MR WONG SZE LUT: This is something we'll look at.
 17 MR VICTOR DAWES: Unlike firefighters, they would look at
 18 the CMS information or FSD messenger would have
 19 instructions issued by commanders.
 20 MR WONG SZE LUT: Let me first talk about CMS. There is
 21 nothing on the frontline that can see such information.
 22 They can only use mobile devices to check such
 23 information, which is why we're making use of FSD
 24 messenger to send such information.
 25 Not every frontline officer would have this phone.

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1 Only commanders on the frontline would have them.
 2 MR VICTOR DAWES: Right. If we look at the interface on the
 3 right, each image would be a new case. It's just like
 4 when we're holding a mobile phone. It's like we have
 5 received 600 images on WhatsApp.
 6 MR WONG SZE LUT: Correct.
 7 MR VICTOR DAWES: And there would be someone screening such
 8 information and conveying the information to frontline
 9 officers?
 10 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes. In general, we would only have two
 11 mobile command units, and this time we had three command
 12 units. One was for issuing commands. And we had
 13 another deputy chief fire officer saying there would be
 14 a frontline command post to on the frontline screen
 15 calls so that frontline officers would not have as much
 16 repeated information to make decisions.
 17 MR VICTOR DAWES: All right. In terms of communication, if
 18 frontline officers have dealt with the cases, is there
 19 some way of knowing on the FSD messenger?
 20 MR WONG SZE LUT: It will not be talked about on FSD
 21 messenger. They would say over the radio, "This case
 22 has been handled". And when the third mobile command
 23 unit arrived, we would not wait for the frontline to
 24 convey such information. We would have proactive
 25 communication to ask about the cases. We wanted to make

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1 sure we would be following up on the cases.
 2 MR VICTOR DAWES: We do note that some requests were not in
 3 the FSD messenger. Some might have already been dealt
 4 with, some might not. If some of the requests that were
 5 received on scene were also dealt with, with the cases
 6 that had been dealt with, how would they be reflected in
 7 the system? Would you communicate it through the radio?
 8 MR WONG SZE LUT: We had mobile command units on the scene,
 9 and when cases had been handled, the mobile command
 10 units would convey such information to the FSCC and they
 11 would input such information.
 12 MR VICTOR DAWES: So there would be staff members of the
 13 FSCC to manually listen to the message and input such
 14 information?
 15 MR WONG SZE LUT: Let me be clear. When requests for
 16 assistance are received, they would make use of Excel to
 17 input such information and they would send the
 18 information to FSCC. Due to security concerns, it is
 19 a closed system, so we need manual input of such
 20 information.
 21 MR VICTOR DAWES: You said there would be improvements made
 22 to the FSD messenger application. If you look at the
 23 interface here, for officers reading the information,
 24 it's not easy for them because there is a vast amount of
 25 information.

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<p>1 MR WONG SZE LUT: Which is why we will in general print 2 paper reports for frontline officers for reference. 3 MR VICTOR DAWES: Can you explain the callback mechanism in 4 greater detail? We have some guidelines for the 5 callback mechanism, and in your witness statement, 6 4.4.2, at 15:20 we already had 80 frontline officers 7 manning 18 hotlines for support. 8 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes. 9 MR VICTOR DAWES: There were 80 officers. They were mainly 10 responsible for manning the 18 lines. 11 MR WONG SZE LUT: Correct. 12 MR VICTOR DAWES: We had 18 lines for a callback mechanism 13 because there were restrictions in manpower or other 14 factors. Would you agree if we had more people calling 15 back the callers it would have been better? 16 MR WONG SZE LUT: On that day we had allocated all available 17 resources. We had all available personnel held and 18 we had all available officers man hotlines. 19 MR VICTOR DAWES: So the maximum number of hotlines is 18 in 20 the first place. 21 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes. 22 MR VICTOR DAWES: And in paragraph 4.1.1, the 999 call 23 centre and the FSCC are separate. 24 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right. 25 MR VICTOR DAWES: So basically, FSD made 18 additional lines</p>	<p>1 arrangement. Have you recorded with your callbacks how 2 would you make records for reference of frontline 3 officers? 4 MR WONG SZE LUT: The calls recorded would only record the 5 conversations between those seeking assistance and us. 6 It does not record conversations with the frontline. 7 And many of those we could not reach in our callback. 8 Approximately half of the 1,500 cases we could call them 9 back. 10 MR VICTOR DAWES: When you called them back, if the person 11 was already rescued, what would you do? For those 12 manning the 18 lines, would they input such information 13 on CMS? 14 MR WONG SZE LUT: No. We only had an independent machine 15 that is not connected to the 18 lines. It is an 16 independent machine that staff members can make use of 17 to input information in the CMS. Or they have the 18 support centre set up on the 6th floor. They can go to 19 the 2nd floor to have FSCC staff input such information. 20 MR VICTOR DAWES: I understand this is a temporary 21 arrangement. With the callback mechanism, in your 22 memory, how many times has such arrangement been 23 deployed? Is it only deployed during major fires like 24 this? 25 MR WONG SZE LUT: For a major fire, this support centre was</p>
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<p>1 available. 2 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes. Let me supplement more information. 3 These calls are not to take calls who have requested 4 for assistance. They are for calling back those who 5 have already made requests for assistance. It is 6 because these lines are not linked to the console and we 7 have 30 lines in the centre and the 18 lines were 8 a temporary solution. 9 MR VICTOR DAWES: These were additional lines? 10 MR WONG SZE LUT: These were lines with recording function. 11 MR VICTOR DAWES: According to your temporary operational 12 guidelines, every 15 to 20 minutes you would call back 13 the callers. 14 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes. 15 MR VICTOR DAWES: Of course you'd try your best, but at the 16 peak on the 27th, 5.46 in the morning, you were past 17 your capacity. There were still 174 calls that had not 18 been dealt with. 19 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right. 20 MR VICTOR DAWES: That was the bottleneck of the system. 21 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes. 22 MR VICTOR DAWES: According to your witness statement, over 23 1,500 calls were made, there were a lot of them. 24 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes. 25 MR VICTOR DAWES: I understand this was a temporary</p>	<p>1 at service for the very first time, but we also 2 established this for typhoons or those incidents 3 affecting the whole territory, but the lines were made 4 open, not for callback. I think this is the first time 5 we opened the lines for callback. 6 MR VICTOR DAWES: What are the procedures? Who would call 7 who first? Would you deal with the new ones first? 8 This is unprecedented, so do you rely on the frontline 9 officers' judgment? 10 MR WONG SZE LUT: I think that's flexible. 11 MR VICTOR DAWES: Chair, perhaps we can -- 12 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: I would want to say, callback 13 is quite useful, as proven by this experience. And 14 we had individuals talking to firefighters, count them 15 down. Of course there is room for improvement, but 16 I think there is some good out of it. 17 Thank you. Let's adjourn to 2.15. 18 (12.58 pm) 19 (The luncheon adjournment) 20 (2.15 pm) 21 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: Please continue. 22 MR VICTOR DAWES: Mr Wong, I'd like to ask you more about 23 callback. When your colleagues call back to callers who 24 have yet to be rescued, of course, the information is 25 very important to frontline staff. How will the</p>

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<p>1 information be passed on; put the information into CMS? 2 MR WONG SZE LUT: That's one of the things they have to do, 3 input into CMS. What is more important is to inform. 4 Because on that day, shortly afterwards, I went to the 5 frontline, I went together with a number of colleagues 6 who are of the rank of station officer. We kept in 7 phone contact, telling us about the information of those 8 waiting for rescue and see if there is any emergency 9 situation, say, for example, caller saying that fire has 10 breached their main door. The information will be 11 passed on to the incident commander to see if priority 12 will be given. 13 MR VICTOR DAWES: So your role was to take a team of station 14 officers to the scene? 15 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right. 16 MR VICTOR DAWES: Let me give you some timeline in relation 17 to certain questions. You have answered certain public 18 enquiries in your statement but we'd like to take the 19 opportunity to answer public queries. 20 Paragraph 8.5, a question asked by someone else: 21 drones. You had a meeting with Dajiang to see if that 22 was possible and whether this technology would be used 23 in your training. 24 MR WONG SZE LUT: Before I answer that question, I'd like to 25 clarify one thing mentioned this morning. We're talking</p>	<p>1 lower. In short, the higher it flies, the jet will be 2 shorter, the pressure will be lower. 3 The second pain point lies in that drones are 4 electronic appliances. There are a lot of electronic 5 components inside drones and they are not 6 heat-resistant. They can normally only withstand heat 7 to 50 degrees Celsius. Of course there can be 8 additional housings to enhance the fire-resistance. 9 Still, drones cannot approach the scene of fire. The 10 higher it flies, the shorter the jettisons are, and 11 they can't fly near the fire scene. 12 Since the load is so heavy, so unlike normal 13 drones -- normal drones, say, for example, the carrying 14 capacity is 80 kilograms. It can handle another 15 additional 40 kilograms. 16 For fire drones to carry such a heavy load, the size 17 must be huge. We have seen products in the mainland. 18 The size of those drones are like two tables added 19 together. So when flying, there would be a very strong 20 downward force, and it's like a helicopter. That kind 21 of vortex will not help us. The vortex may blow the 22 smoke back into the flats and may even contribute to the 23 fire. So we are now working with universities and 24 manufacturers to overcome these inherent technical 25 issues.</p>
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<p>1 about two centres, the 999 command and control centre 2 and the liaison with our centre. This morning I said 3 fax, but that's not entirely true. More often than not, 4 email was used. I'd like to clarify. 5 MR VICTOR DAWES: But fax was still used? 6 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes. We use different means for 7 communication. 8 MR VICTOR DAWES: I'd like to clarify with you, because the 9 record talks about fax records. 10 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes, I understand. 11 MR VICTOR DAWES: Please continue. 12 MR WONG SZE LUT: In relation to drones, we have been doing 13 research in relation to new technology. Since 2017, 14 we've been monitoring the development of drones. If you 15 follow the services we provide then you know that we use 16 drones in investigation of fire, hill fire, earthquake; 17 this has been used. But there is a difficulty, a snag. 18 People query why drones were not used to put out the 19 fire. As far as we know, drones are not deployed in 20 actual firefighting in any part of the world because of 21 a number of pain points. 22 First, the job is to extinguish fire so a fire hose 23 will be carried. Water is heavy. But you require the 24 drones to fly high. So the hose will be longer and the 25 load will be higher. The pressure of the jet will be</p>	<p>1 Frankly speaking, there are a lot of online videos 2 showing that there are fire drones in use. Those are 3 only videos produced by the manufacturers. They have 4 gone through major editing. I won't say they are 5 completely useless, but in our actual firefighting 6 operations, so far they are not mature enough to be 7 deployed. 8 MR VICTOR DAWES: There is another discussion on why 9 helicopters were not deployed to put out the fire. You 10 mentioned the issue of downwash. 11 MR WONG SZE LUT: That's one of the issues. 12 MR VICTOR DAWES: Some say that back in the Garley Building 13 fire, helicopters had been deployed. 14 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right. 15 MR VICTOR DAWES: And some issues were encountered. 16 MR WONG SZE LUT: For Garley Building, we were not putting 17 out the fire, we used helicopters to rescue people. In 18 a subsequent report, we analysed some issues which 19 contributed to the difficulties, but very fortunately we 20 were able to save the residents from the rooftop. 21 So this time the fire was even more of a larger 22 scale than the Garley Building fire. There were seven 23 blocks of buildings on fire and there was a lot of smoke 24 in the air. Even if we asked assistance from the 25 Government Flying Service, what they could do was very</p>

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<p>1 limited.</p> <p>2 We have considered several factors and we considered</p> <p>3 it inappropriate to deploy helicopters. First, the</p> <p>4 downwash; second, the water bombs. Dropping water bombs</p> <p>5 from atop buildings, as I said, water is heavy, so</p> <p>6 a water bomb containing a tank of water is equivalent to</p> <p>7 1 to 2 tonnes of weight. Dropping that kind of volume</p> <p>8 of water onto the fire scene would cause the failing</p> <p>9 scaffoldings to collapse, then it would cause danger to</p> <p>10 our colleagues working on the ground and also the</p> <p>11 evacuees. There would be huge casualties.</p> <p>12 Second, if all the bamboo sticks have collapsed on</p> <p>13 to the ground, it would block our access into the</p> <p>14 building. I also advised on that at the scene. I did</p> <p>15 not think that was appropriate.</p> <p>16 MR VICTOR DAWES: Another factor you mentioned was that it</p> <p>17 will not help internal firefighting.</p> <p>18 MR WONG SZE LUT: That's a simple point. No matter how much</p> <p>19 water we drop from our side, it cannot enter the flats.</p> <p>20 If that could be done, then when there is a downpour,</p> <p>21 when there is rain, then the fire would have been put</p> <p>22 out. The best it can do is to cleanse the facade.</p> <p>23 Inside the building internally we had deployed a lot of</p> <p>24 fire hoses. Some members of the public questioned why</p> <p>25 there were so few hoses but, in fact, we had been using</p>	<p>1 MR VICTOR DAWES: Can you add on that?</p> <p>2 MR WONG SZE LUT: Normally speaking, when we jettison water</p> <p>3 onto the facade, we would be doing so from the</p> <p>4 turntable. The jettison would come into contact with</p> <p>5 the facade, creating a stream of water to prevent the</p> <p>6 spread of the fire.</p> <p>7 MR VICTOR DAWES: Please pause here.</p> <p>8 Normally, the water would not be jettisoned into the</p> <p>9 flats?</p> <p>10 MR WONG SZE LUT: Correct. If we can be sure that there is</p> <p>11 no one inside the flats and that our colleagues have</p> <p>12 evacuated from the flats, then for the purpose of</p> <p>13 transitional firefighting, so that the firefighting</p> <p>14 operation is not disrupted, we would order the turntable</p> <p>15 to spray water to the building with a purpose. Water</p> <p>16 would only be jettisoned onto the ceiling of the flats</p> <p>17 so as to wash away the flammable gas accumulated on the</p> <p>18 ceiling.</p> <p>19 Second is to lower the temperature inside so that</p> <p>20 the water dripping from the ceiling would lower the</p> <p>21 temperature of the flats. But it cannot be a means to</p> <p>22 put out the fire. The water would flow away and the</p> <p>23 water cannot come into direct contact with the burning</p> <p>24 objects inside. So, after all, we required our</p> <p>25 colleagues to go inside the flats to put out the fire.</p>
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<p>1 a lot of them inside the buildings. Only our colleagues</p> <p>2 could see, but actually, inside the staircases it was</p> <p>3 like a waterfall. There was a lot of water inside. So</p> <p>4 dropping water bomb outside the building is basically</p> <p>5 useless.</p> <p>6 MR VICTOR DAWES: Some say that in dealing with this</p> <p>7 building facade fire, the fire spread from the bamboo</p> <p>8 scaffolding. At a very early stage you said that</p> <p>9 because of the collapsed bamboo scaffolding you could</p> <p>10 not have access into the buildings.</p> <p>11 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right.</p> <p>12 MR VICTOR DAWES: Some say that since that's the case,</p> <p>13 shouldn't drones or helicopters be deployed to drop</p> <p>14 water bombs at the very early stage of the fire; I</p> <p>15 believe the factors why it cannot be done have been</p> <p>16 mentioned by you just now?</p> <p>17 MR WONG SZE LUT: Correct.</p> <p>18 MR VICTOR DAWES: There's another saying, and that's the</p> <p>19 question put by the chairman to your colleague, that</p> <p>20 spraying water into the flats is not impossible, but it</p> <p>21 comes with a risk.</p> <p>22 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.</p> <p>23 MR VICTOR DAWES: Since the temperature is very high inside,</p> <p>24 it may cause danger to those inside the building.</p> <p>25 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.</p>	<p>1 MR VICTOR DAWES: You mentioned another risk, that is the</p> <p>2 steam created.</p> <p>3 MR WONG SZE LUT: Correct. Yes, water can lower the</p> <p>4 temperature, but that's because water can absorb heat</p> <p>5 and become steam. Steam is something very hot and it</p> <p>6 would fill the flat. Let's say the fire has not reached</p> <p>7 the bedroom yet, if we are spraying a lot of water into</p> <p>8 the living room, the steam would cause danger to the</p> <p>9 residents in the bedrooms. Besides burning, that's not</p> <p>10 the major risk. The high temperature gas would cause</p> <p>11 inflammation and swelling inside the respiratory system.</p> <p>12 MR VICTOR DAWES: It would cause immediate danger.</p> <p>13 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right.</p> <p>14 MR VICTOR DAWES: So from the evidence we have heard, some</p> <p>15 residents observing outside queried whether there is</p> <p>16 insufficient water pressure and that the turntable</p> <p>17 ladder was not raised high enough. What is your</p> <p>18 explanation for that?</p> <p>19 MR WONG SZE LUT: The turntable ladder can reach a maximum</p> <p>20 height of 56 metres, but the water stream, it can reach</p> <p>21 some 20 floors high. So what about the floors above the</p> <p>22 20th floor? As I have said, we do not just rely on</p> <p>23 equipment from the outside. Actually, most of the</p> <p>24 advanced economies use turntable ladder with similar</p> <p>25 heights as ours. There are some southeast Asian</p>

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<p>1 countries with turntable ladders as high as 100 metres. 2 Why are we not using that? Because the appliances would 3 be much heavier than ours. For our roads, the load is 4 30 tonnes and the maximum width they can accommodate is 5 6 metres. So they can accommodate our 56-metre-high 6 turntable ladder. 7 For the other turntable ladder I mentioned, they 8 weigh 60 to 80 tonnes and they need to extend outriggers 9 to support the turntable ladder. Those outriggers will 10 extend 10 metres wide. 10 metres is equivalent to four 11 carriageway lanes. There is not much room in Hong Kong, 12 there is not much road in Hong Kong like that which can 13 accommodate these large vehicles, and many of our roads 14 are not suitable for their use. 15 Now, in the mainland there is one such turntable 16 ladder in Shenzhen and it can only travel along 17 a pre-designated route. It cannot enter older districts. 18 So we cannot simply rely on turntable ladder to put out 19 fire. There are physical constraints. 20 Wang Fuk Court is 30 storeys high. ICC is 100 21 storeys high. Internal firefighting is important and 22 also the building's own fire services installations are 23 very important. These are the major tools. 24 MR VICTOR DAWES: There are some sayings that since the 25 scaffolding has caught fire, shouldn't the Fire Services</p>	<p>1 firefighting and also the use of technology, and we have 2 also explored some of the issues, I would like to give 3 you an opportunity to tell us, after this fire, are 4 there any other aspects you would continue to study and 5 improve? 6 MR WONG SZE LUT: All along we have been thinking hard. 7 Until this day we have been asking ourselves what could 8 have been done better. There are a lot of minor things 9 we can improve on, but like you said, we can consider 10 deploying more technologies. And also there's room for 11 improvement in terms of setting priorities. 12 Communication, when we receive calls and our 13 communication with the callers, we can improve. 14 But here's my own feelings. I'm also a member of 15 the disaster relief team, I have been to Turkey for the 16 disaster relief operation. In face of such a huge 17 catastrophe, as a member of the rescue team, we would 18 felt sorry because what we could do is very limited, we 19 are just human beings. Of course we would continue to 20 think up room for improvement, but I think we should 21 start from prevention rather than being retrospective. 22 We have done our best, but the results are not as 23 satisfactory as we expected. 24 MR VICTOR DAWES: From all the evidence we have seen, all 25 the firefighters and rescuers that day have done their</p>
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<p>1 Department remove the scaffoldings sooner, to prepare 2 the spread of the fire? What are the difficulties in 3 that? 4 MR WONG SZE LUT: The situation on that day was that for 5 scaffolding which had been affected by the fire service 6 installation, they had already collapsed. For bamboo 7 scaffolding, they were connected through plastic cords. 8 Bamboo scaffolding, despite the fire retardancy, they 9 can still be burned. However, the plastic cords would 10 snap immediately when they are burned, so for the 11 remaining scaffolding, if we remove them all and let 12 them fall to the ground, it would block our access. We 13 have no idea, after removing the scaffolding, whether 14 it would cause even more danger to the passersby. 15 Having considered the priorities, we decided to leave 16 them alone, since it was not necessary. We only had to 17 remove those scaffolding which blocked our access into 18 the building, and that was enough. 19 MR VICTOR DAWES: Apparently you had considered many 20 strategies of firefighting on that day and also the 21 communication gap. You are a senior member in the 22 management of the FSD, so this is my question for you. 23 MR WONG SZE LUT: Right. 24 MR VICTOR DAWES: Since you have considered so many options, 25 to prevent similar accidents from happening again during</p>	<p>1 best, really. So here we would like to extend our 2 gratitude to them. 3 I have no further questions, chairman. 4 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: Any other questions from 5 other parties? 6 If not, Mr Suen? 7 Examination by MR JENKIN SUEN 8 MR JENKIN SUEN: Thank you, chairman. Thank you, members. 9 Mr Wong, I have two questions in relation to two 10 areas for you. First of all, this morning Mr Victor 11 Dawes SC asked you questions concerning the mechanism or 12 guidelines that the police deal with 999 calls. That's 13 WS2/1144. 14 Before I take you through the paper, you remember 15 that Mr Dawes has confirmed with you that the operators, 16 the police console operators, after receiving a call, if 17 the call is related to fire, they should have 18 immediately transferred the call to the FSD. That's the 19 first action they should do rather than obtaining more 20 information. 21 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes. 22 MR VICTOR DAWES: So I know this is not within the ambit of 23 the FSD, this is not the instructions of the FSD, but 24 rather the police. But please look at paragraph 3. 25 Would you please first look at the line:</p>

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<p>1 "If the caller states an accident involving injury 2 has occurred or reports a fire, or requests provision of 3 either an ambulance or fire appliance the caller will be 4 immediately informed that the call will be connected to 5 ambulance or fire control." 6 In other words, if the incidents involve injuries or 7 a fire or that ambulances or fire appliances are 8 required, then the police operator would immediately 9 tell the caller that the call would be connected to the 10 ambulance or fire control. As far as you understand, 11 that's the standard protocol? 12 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes. 13 MR JENKIN SUEN: Somewhere in the paragraph, at the bottom 14 two lines it says: 15 "... the operator will then ask for any further 16 details from the caller before closing the 17 conversation." 18 So after transferring the call to the FSD, as 19 mentioned in paragraph 3, the 999 console operator may 20 ask for more information or particulars from the caller. 21 Is that the case as far as you understand? In other 22 words, while waiting for the call to be picked up from 23 the FSD, the police console operator can make use of 24 that time to obtain more information? 25 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes. May I supplement a few points?</p>	<p>1 THE HON MR CHAN KIN-POR: Yes. Mr Wong, I have some 2 questions. There have been discussions in society to 3 ask if we should have bamboo scaffoldings or metal 4 scaffoldings. What is your professional judgment? Do 5 you have any comments on this? 6 MR WONG SZE LUT: Good afternoon, member. 7 I am not a professional in buildings. I would say 8 there are pros and cons, in my understanding. For 9 bamboo scaffoldings, they can catch on fire, they are 10 not exactly flammable. At the right temperature, they 11 are lit on fire. 12 With metal scaffoldings, it cannot catch fire, but 13 then at high temperatures their structures can be 14 altered and their weight is much higher than bamboo 15 scaffoldings. So it can be a greater hazard compared to 16 bamboo scaffoldings. We can't really say. 17 THE HON MR CHAN KIN-POR: You said that the bamboo 18 scaffoldings can get loose and easily catch on fire, but 19 we can see some construction workers making use of 20 bamboo ties. 21 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes. 22 THE HON MR CHAN KIN-POR: They are more flexible or bamboo 23 scaffoldings, they are more flexible and they are more 24 sturdy because otherwise the structure may easily be 25 altered.</p>
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<p>1 MR JENKIN SUEN: Yes. 2 MR WONG SZE LUT: As I've mentioned, we are cooperating 3 closely with the police. The police has helped us 4 tremendously in a three-party call, the police would not 5 hang up immediately, they would wait and see if our 6 dispatchers have obtained all the information 7 successfully. So the console operator would be asking 8 for additional information from the caller and I find 9 that not surprising and sometimes that's very helpful as 10 well. 11 MR JENKIN SUEN: Thank you. Another question: this morning 12 Mr Victor Dawes asked you that deputy director Mr Chan 13 at 16:20, 26 November 2025, he issued an evacuation 14 order for all eight blocks of the buildings, so when the 15 deputy commissioner gives evidence, we can ask him 16 again. So that's not an evacuation order for every 17 person. So by 16:20, you were not at the scene yet. 18 MR WONG SZE LUT: Correct. 19 MR JENKIN SUEN: So concerning the plans made by the 20 commander at scene, you did not have firsthand 21 information? 22 MR WONG SZE LUT: Correct. 23 MR JENKIN SUEN: I have no further questions. 24 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: Any re-examination? 25 Questions by THE MEMBERS</p>	<p>1 MR WONG SZE LUT: I did not really investigate whether we 2 should make use of bamboo or other materials. I think 3 we need scientific tests to see the different factors, 4 including flammability and sturdiness. In the past we 5 did not expect such a fire spread because there were 6 standards with the scaffolding nets and otherwise in 7 construction sites. We will learn from this experience 8 to see what we can do better in the future. 9 THE HON MR CHAN KIN-POR: As the Government said and some 10 citizens asked, why we didn't seek assistance from 11 Guangdong Province; can you talk about it? 12 MR WONG SZE LUT: About 10 pm on 26 November, from our 13 colleagues we learned that we had Guangdong Provincial 14 officers, 20 appliances, approximately 100 firemen 15 gathered at the border. There were discussions as to 16 whether we should ask them to come help. 17 Let me first say what happened at the scene. We had 18 980 firefighters deployed. For a No. 5 alarm fire, this 19 is fivefold the general figure for general cases, and 20 every day we have approximately 1,700 firemen on duty. 21 If we need more officers, we can deploy more. 22 But, as said in previous discussions, the scene was 23 already full of appliances. Even with more 24 firefighters, they might not have been able to get into 25 buildings because the situation was very serious. With</p>

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<p>1 these considerations, we really didn't have need for 2 additional manpower. In terms of tools and equipment, 3 it was not exactly compatible. It was -- it would be 4 incompatible. Say breathing apparatus, they use 5 different ones from ours. And air tanks can be used up, 6 right? Can we really replenish their air cylinders? 7 That is an important question. 8 They are also not well aware of the fire safety 9 systems in Hong Kong. They also have different 10 couplings, so they need an additional adapter. And the 11 visibility was not good, it was dark; they had to feel 12 things by touching. On this premise, if they had to 13 learn anew how the system worked, it would have been 14 difficult. 15 We also have different action operation guidelines. 16 For example, our colleague issued a mayday signal, 17 "Mayday, mayday", and for firemen on the mainland side, 18 they would say "hujiao hujiao", which is also "mayday", 19 but in Putonghua. 20 So when things were really noisy, it would already 21 have been really hard to hear different things, and if 22 they said it in a different language, it would be hard 23 for us to understand the situation. 24 And with evacuation, we would have the horns blast 25 and they have intermittent blasts, whereas we would have</p>	<p>1 solutions. We have been looking at a new breathing 2 apparatus. But as Mr Chan said, why is it that it would 3 only last 30 minutes? It's because there are physical 4 limitations. It is pressurised gas. It's not exactly 5 oxygen, it's just air that we breathe in in general, but 6 with it pressurised in the tank it is approximately 7 300 atmospheric pressure. 8 And if they can have greater -- have it pressurised 9 even more, it can have more air. But right now, the 10 ideal pressure is just 300 atmospheric pressure points 11 and that would allow for an operation time of 12 approximately 33 minutes. 13 If one breathes in a more laboured manner, 14 they would make use of more air. Can one carry two 15 tanks? We do have some two-tank breathing apparatus, 16 but in general it is not used when one enters a 17 building. With two tanks it is going to get heavier. 18 Even though firefighters can breathe in air for a long 19 time, but because they will be more laboured, they need 20 more air. It's also less flexible. It can also 21 obstruct firefighters' movements with entering certain 22 doorways. So this two-tank breathing apparatus will be 23 used in, say, tunnels. With buildings they would just 24 use single tanks, this is the general practice in the 25 world.</p>
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<p>1 long blasts. So there may have been a misunderstanding 2 with evacuation, and I mean evacuation for officers. 3 With their different considerations, for the 4 Wang Fuk Court incident, we thought we weren't ready to 5 have mainland personnel help, but there were of course 6 some concerns raised that we have this cooperation 7 framework between Macau, Hong Kong and Guangdong. But 8 this is actually a phase arrangement. For natural 9 disasters, for example, flooding and others, we have 10 such arrangement, but for fires we still need more 11 aligning of arrangements. 12 We of course want to take forward stage 2 13 arrangements as soon as possible. Unfortunately, if we 14 have something like this again, we will be able to make 15 use of this tripartite support. This is a long-term 16 direction we will take. 17 THE HON MR CHAN KIN-POR: I want to ask you another question 18 because you are an expert. We have not had any upgrades 19 to the air cylinders for many years. It only lasts for 20 half an hour. Will there be room for improvement? 21 Because this is very important. 22 MR WONG SZE LUT: I want to correct the member on something. 23 There was improvement. Breathing apparatus is very 24 important. For manufacturers or different firefighters 25 in different places, we have been looking at different</p>	<p>1 THE HON MR CHAN KIN-POR: Thank you. 2 DR REX AUYEUNG PAK-KUEN: Mr Wong, I want to follow up on 3 something. You mentioned technology many times today. 4 Can you share with us, with the Fire Services 5 Department, you said with 999 service, with one minute 6 more it is really helpful, we have rapid advancement of 7 technology. Can you explain to us what we have to 8 consider in factors? 9 MR WONG SZE LUT: Let me now talk about the frontier 10 technological research in firefighting. We have 11 introduced two firefighting robots. They are not robots 12 that look like humans. They look like tanks. They are 13 essentially tools. We have had this for a while. As 14 you may remember, we had a cable bridge in Tuen Mun that 15 was burned; we also used robots. Why didn't we use that 16 this time, we did deploy the robot to the scene, but it 17 was relatively large. Without a hose, they can't really 18 get into the scene with use. And we have already two 19 bought before the Wang Fuk Court incident and they have 20 hoses. They can also traverse through narrow stairs. 21 We also said indoors the temperature was high. It would 22 be hard for us to deploy robotics. 23 With the fires, we don't really use drones. We have 24 been piloting at rural locations, we will have drone 25 surveillance. Drones will be used to see if there are</p>

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1 hill fires. We also have autonomous vessels. They're
 2 more flexible than firefighting boats. With these
 3 autonomous boats, before firefighters arrive, they can
 4 already do firefighting work.
 5 So these are some examples. We will continue to
 6 explore different options.
 7 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: Re-examination?
 8 Re-examination by MR VICTOR DAWES
 9 MR VICTOR DAWES: I wanted to supplement information on this
 10 particular issue. I wanted to ask another officer on
 11 this, but since there were questions on why Shenzhen
 12 officers weren't deployed to Hong Kong, according to
 13 your reply, on that day there were enough firemen.
 14 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.
 15 MR VICTOR DAWES: Even deploying more officers and
 16 appliances wouldn't help, it just wouldn't help.
 17 MR WONG SZE LUT: It was not a manpower problem.
 18 MR VICTOR DAWES: And there is also a difference in
 19 technical language.
 20 MR WONG SZE LUT: Yes.
 21 MR VICTOR DAWES: You raised the example of "mayday".
 22 I believe a lot of jargon you use will be different in
 23 different places.
 24 MR WONG SZE LUT: Correct.
 25 MR VICTOR DAWES: I also want to ask about communication.

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1 With walkie-talkies, I believe they do not use the same
 2 communication system so you can't really communicate;
 3 there would be some difficulty.
 4 MR WONG SZE LUT: We can't communicate directly.
 5 MR VICTOR DAWES: All right. Thank you.
 6 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: Any other questions from the
 7 Government side?
 8 All right. Mr Wong, having heard your testimony,
 9 I would say the Wang Fuk Court incident is an
 10 unprecedented challenge for you. I believe the FSD will
 11 conduct internal reviews. They will try to make use of
 12 the latest technology. We will leave it to you because
 13 you are the experts. This session we have asked you
 14 about a lot of communication and guidelines. We also
 15 noted how 999 -- we only have one number in Hong Kong.
 16 It is important to have good coordination between the
 17 police and FSD. I believe you will conduct reviews in
 18 future.
 19 Let me say again here, citizens recognise and
 20 appreciate the efforts of frontline officers. On the
 21 day there were victims of the fire -- because of the
 22 callbacks made by FSD personnel, they were thankful and
 23 they expressed their gratitude at the evidential hearing
 24 earlier. Please convey this message to the frontline
 25 officers.

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1 Thank you for giving testimony today. You may
 2 leave.
 3 (The witness was released)
 4 (2.55 pm)
 5 MR VICTOR DAWES: The next person to give evidence is
 6 Ms Tsang Shuk Yin, the chief superintendent.
 7 Madam, good afternoon. Can you read the declaration
 8 before you.
 9 (2.55 pm)
 10 MS TSANG SHUK YIN (affirmed)
 11 Examination by MR VICTOR DAWES
 12 MR VICTOR DAWES: Thank you. Please be seated. We
 13 understand that you joined the Police Force in 1998 and
 14 you were promoted to chief superintendent in 2022.
 15 MS TSANG SHUK YIN: Yes.
 16 MR VICTOR DAWES: You are responsible for the complaints and
 17 internal investigations branch.
 18 MS TSANG SHUK YIN: Yes.
 19 MR VICTOR DAWES: You gave a witness statement and you
 20 confirm the accuracy of the contents?
 21 MS TSANG SHUK YIN: I confirm.
 22 MR VICTOR DAWES: On the day you were responsible for the
 23 casualty enquiry unit?
 24 MS TSANG SHUK YIN: Yes.
 25 MR VICTOR DAWES: According to paragraph 20 of your witness

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1 statement, at 17:36 hours on the day, you were informed
 2 by Mr David Jordan, ACP (Ops), and the Wang Fuk Court
 3 incident was declared as a major incident and was
 4 instructed to mobilise the CEU, casualty enquiry unit?
 5 MS TSANG SHUK YIN: Yes.
 6 MR VICTOR DAWES: To help people understand this decision
 7 better, what criteria do the police adopt in defining a
 8 major incident?
 9 MS TSANG SHUK YIN: Thank you, Mr Dawes. Can I have some
 10 time to explain the establishment of the CEU? I will
 11 just take some time.
 12 MR VICTOR DAWES: I will ask you later, but please.
 13 MS TSANG SHUK YIN: CEU is not a recurrent operational unit.
 14 Should there be disasters or major incidents, the
 15 ACP (Ops), Assistant Commissioner of Police
 16 (Operations), with his/her instructions, we will
 17 mobilise the CEU, and we will have officers from
 18 different units, such as police college. They have
 19 undertaken training. Every year, there are two training
 20 sessions to train them on how to operate the CEU.
 21 In general, the standard protocol is that the senior
 22 superintendent of CAPO, Complaints Against Police
 23 Office, will be the designated officer in command, but
 24 at about 4 pm on that day there was a serious fire, we
 25 were informed of such. We were told that the CEU might

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<p>1 be utilised and we first checked the roster, who would 2 be on first call duty, which on that day was CAPO 3 Hong Kong Island and they were stationed in Tsing Yi. 4 At 17:36 hours, it was officially said that the CEU 5 should be established. 6 With Mr Dawes' question, what criteria we would 7 adopt to establish the CEU. This is an enquiry unit, as 8 the name suggests. With major incidents, there would be 9 FSD officers and the police officers doing rescue work, 10 traffic management work, making sure roads are open. 11 Family members can also get quite worried, which is why 12 we have the CEU for family and friends to understand the 13 status of those who are injured or died, which is why 14 the ACP (Ops) has different considerations, what is 15 happening at the scene, the rescue work, how many 16 casualties there are. 17 For example, the last time CEU was mobilised was in 18 2018. There was the traffic accident in Tai Po. There 19 were 19 deaths and 65 of those injured. The CEU was 20 mobilised two times. And then there was the Lamma 21 boat-sinking incident and it was mobilised then. It 22 really depends on the scale of the incidents. 23 We can see the Wang Fuk Court incident very quickly 24 involved six or seven blocks and it would involve 25 approximately 1,700 individuals. At 17:36 hours, the</p>	<p>1 we received the information, we made a record and the 2 information is related to the reception team. The 3 callers might be making enquiries or reporting missing 4 persons. If they know that their family were living 5 there or there, they would have called 999. I checked 6 the record. Five cases have yet been related to 999. 7 We realised the urgency so we informed NT North as well 8 as Tai Po Police Station colleagues. 9 So receiving calls was the first part. Triage was 10 the second part. And there were other teams, say 11 indexing; the information received will be put into the 12 computer system. There is a matching team. I have put 13 more manpower resources there because a phone call for 14 enquiries, one, but at that time CEU received a lot of 15 information from the ground. That includes seven 16 shelters, temporary ones set up on that day for 17 residents to rest or waiting for further information 18 when they have evacuated. A lot of residents have gone 19 to these shelters where there was a safe place. 20 We're talking about Wang Fuk Court. 1,736 units. 21 How many households were safe? How many people were 22 there? We needed to ask the residents that were there 23 to see if everyone was accounted for and if there was 24 any missing person and who they were. So there are also 25 information from hospitals because the injured had been</p>
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<p>1 unit was mobilised. 2 MR VICTOR DAWES: Well, as you've explained, the main 3 purpose for the unit is for families to make enquiries. 4 You were in charge it. There are some sub-teams within 5 the unit, six of them. Can you tell us about their 6 work? 7 MS TSANG SHUK YIN: Yes. On that day, when the centre was 8 set up, we had about 50 staff members. They were 9 divided into six teams, that is the headquarters team, 10 which assisted me in deployment and logistic 11 arrangements. There was also a public inquiry team. 12 When the centre was set up, there was a hotline, 1878 13 999. At 17:36, when we realised we had to set up 14 a centre, the hotline was set up at 18:32. We liaised 15 with media through our public relations to disseminate 16 the information so families could make enquiries. 17 One team was dedicated to receive phone calls. The 18 PET, that is the public enquiry team, can be manned by 19 a maximum of 30 operators. I gauged the number of 20 incoming calls. I deployed 10 operators to receive 21 incoming calls. 22 A lot of people might call to make enquiries, trying 23 to locate someone or the caller knew someone, one of 24 their friends or family, was living at that address, 25 they couldn't locate them so they made the call. When</p>	<p>1 sent there. We liaised with hospitals, trying to 2 identify cases that had been sent to hospitals. 3 There were also bodies that had been removed from 4 the scene to the Tai Po Community Hall. That's another 5 area of information. In addition, in one of the 6 shelters, we obtained some information from the 7 management office. It's a manual record of, say, 8 a unit, a Mr Choi, with a number, some of them are 9 tenants, some are owners, some are just contact persons. 10 The information may not be most updated, but in any 11 event, we had some kind of contact information of the 12 units. We had to screen the information. So on one 13 hand we received calls from callers. The matching team 14 would have to match the information with the information 15 we had at hand, say, the persons already at the 16 community hall, save the information would be passed on 17 to the family. 18 Say I had already been given instruction that if it 19 was good news, say, for example, the person was safe or 20 just injured, the information should be passed to family 21 as soon as possible. But if it's sad news, say bodies 22 removed from a certain floor, we would tactfully inform 23 the next of kin, because NTN police had already made 24 arrangement that on the next day at 3 pm at, Tai Po 25 Community Hall there would be a temporary arrangement</p>

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1 for body identification. On that day, when bodies were
 2 removed to the community hall, we made arrangements for
 3 families to do the identification. So that's matching.
 4 At the same time, there's a team in charge of
 5 investigation. What do they do? When calls were made,
 6 they may not know whether the person they were looking
 7 for actually lived in Wang Fuk Court. They don't know
 8 or it's someone that they knew, they hadn't had contact
 9 for a very long time, they were not sure if they lived
 10 in Wang Fuk Court. So we would carry out the screening
 11 work. We'd check movement records of the Immigration
 12 Department to see if that person had already left
 13 Hong Kong. We checked records in the registry, birth
 14 and death registry, to see if they are still alive
 15 and we also checked records within the police.
 16 But we created a missing persons report and we
 17 identified 166 people had died. It's not 168, it's 166
 18 because we confirmed that the family of two deceased did
 19 not contact our hotline. That might be the case because
 20 they would have called 999 or they had already
 21 identified their family. There were also 37 injured
 22 persons, 184 of them were confirmed to be safe after our
 23 enquiry.
 24 There were also 31 cases, the people involved in
 25 these cases had already passed away before the fire.

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1 Their families or friends had not had contact with them
 2 for a very long time. For six cases, they had already
 3 left Hong Kong, according to our record.
 4 There was also one case which turned out to be
 5 a misunderstanding. We called the caller back and it
 6 was not a call for a missing person.
 7 There were also a handful of cases with vague
 8 information, say whether I have a friend called Man but
 9 I'm not sure whether they were living in Tai Po. So
 10 about 31 of such cases where it was non-pursuable.
 11 MR VICTOR DAWES: There is a list in WS2/1194. I'm sure you
 12 are familiar with the list. You talk about the
 13 different categories. The information can be gleaned
 14 from this list.
 15 MS TSANG SHUK YIN: Right.
 16 MR VICTOR DAWES: 166, because there are 168 people making
 17 enquiries, and 166 people approached you, two did not.
 18 MS TSANG SHUK YIN: Right.
 19 MR VICTOR DAWES: We have seen duplications, quite a number
 20 of them. They are duplicated calls for assistance for
 21 the same person.
 22 MS TSANG SHUK YIN: Yes.
 23 MR VICTOR DAWES: There is one example. From 232 to 233,
 24 page 1201 -- well, actually, items 232 and 233, that is
 25 a duplication, dead and confirmed dead.

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1 There are 31 cases, as you mentioned, that were
 2 "non-pursuable because of insufficient information". So
 3 the information supplied was not sufficient for further
 4 investigation. Is it because of two reasons, first, the
 5 information provided by the caller was insufficient?
 6 MS TSANG SHUK YIN: Right.
 7 MR VICTOR DAWES: And the second reason was that the person
 8 did not actually live in Wang Fuk?
 9 MS TSANG SHUK YIN: When a call was made and if it was
 10 certain that the person was living in Wang Fuk, it will
 11 be under our radar. We're talking about 31 cases under
 12 which the caller did not know whether the person was
 13 actually living in Wang Fuk. The last time they had
 14 contact, they lived in Tai Po and they were not sure
 15 whether the person was living in Wang Fuk, or it's
 16 just a nickname or they only had a telephone number but
 17 have lost contact for quite some time and they saw that
 18 there was a disaster, they wanted to locate the friend,
 19 that's why they called.
 20 MR VICTOR DAWES: Number 565. "Misunderstanding; enquirer
 21 had no intention to make a report." What was it about?
 22 MS TSANG SHUK YIN: Well, when an enquirer made the call, it
 23 was quite rushed because they wanted to find the person,
 24 they knew about the hotline, so they made the call.
 25 When we called them back, they successfully located

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1 their friend. It was a misunderstanding, so it was not
 2 a call for a missing person.
 3 MR VICTOR DAWES: "MP" is missing person?
 4 MS TSANG SHUK YIN: Yes.
 5 MR VICTOR DAWES: I would like to ask about your work on
 6 that day and the communications with the FSD. Because
 7 the public knows of different means, different telephone
 8 numbers to call, but according to you, some did not call
 9 999. So how would you forward the information to the
 10 FSD?
 11 MS TSANG SHUK YIN: Let me put it this way. At 18:32,
 12 through the public relations, we inform the public about
 13 the hotline. We made it clear to the general public
 14 that the hotline was for making enquiries in relation to
 15 deceased and injury cases for the fire. It's not for
 16 urgent assistance. However, from 18:32 on the 26th to
 17 the 27th, there were five calls. As I said, an
 18 inspector was in charge of each team.
 19 Let me give you some examples. There was one case,
 20 a lady living in Wang Sun House, she has left the unit.
 21 She called the hotline because a cat was left in the
 22 unit. She wondered how we could help.
 23 There were also three other cases. Members of the
 24 public learned through YouTube or online means that
 25 there were people calling for help in units of Wang Fuk

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<p>1 Court and they have called 999. So for these cases, we</p> <p>2 thought that we should inform NTN Control and Command</p> <p>3 Centre, as well as the Tai Po Police Station.</p> <p>4 Well, starting from 6 o'clock or so, the FSD had</p> <p>5 already by then been dealing with the situation for</p> <p>6 about four hours, so in relation to answering calls for</p> <p>7 assistance and firefighting, the work was already</p> <p>8 ongoing. If a call was made to locate someone in</p> <p>9 a unit, a friend, say for example living in that unit,</p> <p>10 I would not just hand over the information to the FSD</p> <p>11 because it will overload them. We have to first screen</p> <p>12 the information because a lot of people they were</p> <p>13 looking for were already at the shelters.</p> <p>14 In relation to the five cases, I've already briefed</p> <p>15 that my colleagues that if it warrants immediate</p> <p>16 attention say, for example, the caller has not called</p> <p>17 999, then we remind them to call 999 because we cannot</p> <p>18 make the connection directly. We will pass on the</p> <p>19 information to relevant colleagues.</p> <p>20 MR VICTOR DAWES: In short, indeed there are some cases in</p> <p>21 which the calls were first made to you, and then we know</p> <p>22 from records that the information received by the FSD</p> <p>23 was later than you did. So you first have to look into</p> <p>24 whether the cases should be passed on to the FSD.</p> <p>25 MS TSANG SHUK YIN: Are you talking about these cases? Can</p>	<p>1 updated information. We tried to carry out the</p> <p>2 investigation and screening as soon as possible. If</p> <p>3 necessary, inform the family. That is the purpose of</p> <p>4 the establishment of the unit. We wanted to inform</p> <p>5 family members of the status of the injured or the</p> <p>6 deceased.</p> <p>7 MR VICTOR DAWES: From what you said, if a call was made to</p> <p>8 the centre, then you would ask if they had called 999</p> <p>9 first?</p> <p>10 MS TSANG SHUK YIN: Right. Even though it was not our</p> <p>11 protocol. Say, on the two previous occasions of the</p> <p>12 CEU, it was an enquiry about injury and decease. So,</p> <p>13 for example, there's a deceased, what was the identity.</p> <p>14 Or if someone calls to try to find the identity of</p> <p>15 someone involved in an accident, that was an accident or</p> <p>16 an incident that's already completed. But this time it</p> <p>17 was ongoing, so the situation was fluid.</p> <p>18 MR VICTOR DAWES: So there were cases when you were first</p> <p>19 approached and then later the FSD received a record.</p> <p>20 That perhaps was a communication issue. It would be</p> <p>21 impossible for us to find out why.</p> <p>22 MS TSANG SHUK YIN: You can put it that way.</p> <p>23 MR VICTOR DAWES: This is not a criticism. We fully</p> <p>24 understand the situation at that time, which was</p> <p>25 complicated.</p>
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<p>1 you show me the records?</p> <p>2 MR VICTOR DAWES: Let's look at the actual records, say</p> <p>3 WS2/290, case number 5, page number 1194. From the</p> <p>4 record we see that at 18:41 you received someone, a lady</p> <p>5 named Pak, an enquiry. See the fourth row?</p> <p>6 MS TSANG SHUK YIN: Yes.</p> <p>7 MR VICTOR DAWES: From the FSD record on the same day at</p> <p>8 19:39, they first received a call for assistance from</p> <p>9 unit 1701 from Wang Tai House.</p> <p>10 MS TSANG SHUK YIN: Yes.</p> <p>11 MR VICTOR DAWES: The reason, is it because, as you said,</p> <p>12 you received a call for assistance but you needed time</p> <p>13 to screen the case instead of just passing on the</p> <p>14 information automatically? Is this the example?</p> <p>15 MS TSANG SHUK YIN: I can't answer you in relation to this</p> <p>16 example. That evening, our centre did not have any</p> <p>17 direct passing on of information with the FSD. For</p> <p>18 urgent cases, it had to be done through 999 with the FSD</p> <p>19 communication centre. What we did was screening and</p> <p>20 investigation.</p> <p>21 We hope you understand that there was a huge amount</p> <p>22 of information fed to us, information from temporary</p> <p>23 shelters. People were mobile, going to different</p> <p>24 places. We have colleagues on the ground to collect</p> <p>25 information, so at different times we received different</p>	<p>1 I don't have any other questions.</p> <p>2 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: Any other involved parties?</p> <p>3 Mr Suen?</p> <p>4 I have to say a few words. In this huge disaster of</p> <p>5 Wang Fuk Court, the casualty enquiry unit played an</p> <p>6 important role, whether it was relaying good news or bad</p> <p>7 news. I believe your work has helped a lot of families.</p> <p>8 The general public acknowledge the work of the CEU. I</p> <p>9 can, on behalf of the general public, say thank you to</p> <p>10 your colleagues because they have done something really</p> <p>11 meaningful in this instance. I thank Ms Tsang for</p> <p>12 coming to give evidence. Thank you.</p> <p>13 (The witness was released)</p> <p>14 (3.19 pm)</p> <p>15 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: Should we take a break now?</p> <p>16 MR VICTOR DAWES: It depends on the chairman. I believe the</p> <p>17 next witness will not take too long.</p> <p>18 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: We can continue.</p> <p>19 MR VICTOR DAWES: The next witness is Superintendent Cheng</p> <p>20 Ka Chun.</p> <p>21 Mr Cheng, good afternoon. There is a declaration</p> <p>22 before you. Please read it out.</p> <p>23</p> <p>24</p> <p>25</p>

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<p>1 (3.20 pm)</p> <p>2 MR CHENG KA CHUN (affirmed)</p> <p>3 Examination by MR VICTOR DAWES</p> <p>4 MR VICTOR DAWES: Please be seated. Mr Cheng, we are aware</p> <p>5 that you are a senior police officer. You joined the</p> <p>6 Police Force in 1995 and in 2018 you were promoted to</p> <p>7 superintendent. You belong to the detective training</p> <p>8 centre. You are the director of that centre.</p> <p>9 I believe we have seen you on TV concerning the</p> <p>10 Wang Fuk Court fire incident. You are the head of the</p> <p>11 disaster victim identification unit, DVIU. So the DVIU</p> <p>12 has played a very crucial role in the incident.</p> <p>13 I would like to give you an opportunity to explain</p> <p>14 how the DVIU works under your supervision.</p> <p>15 MR CHENG KA CHUN: Thank you, Mr Victor Dawes. My original</p> <p>16 duty is the officer in charge of the DVIU. The police</p> <p>17 DVIU has been set up in year 1975 according to</p> <p>18 Interpol's standard. Since its establishment, it</p> <p>19 belongs to the detective training centre under the</p> <p>20 police academy, so the head of the technical training</p> <p>21 centre would also double up as the officer in charge of</p> <p>22 the DVIU.</p> <p>23 The purpose of the DVIU is to search for human</p> <p>24 remains at scenes of catastrophe and then we would</p> <p>25 assist the coroners to identify the identities of these</p>	<p>1 to search for human remains at the scene.</p> <p>2 The third group is the collection team. So when the</p> <p>3 recovery team has found suspected human remains and</p> <p>4 other exhibits, they would be transferred to a temporary</p> <p>5 human remains collection post at the scene for</p> <p>6 confirmation and record to confirm that those human</p> <p>7 remains information is correct.</p> <p>8 Subsequently, the human remains would be transferred</p> <p>9 to the mortuary. There is another team at the public</p> <p>10 mortuary to assist the coroner to confirm the identities</p> <p>11 of those suspected human remains. That's the mode of</p> <p>12 operation of the DVIU.</p> <p>13 At the same time we would collect information from</p> <p>14 the relevant departments to assist the coroner's job in</p> <p>15 identifying the human remains.</p> <p>16 MR VICTOR DAWES: According to your record, since</p> <p>17 29 November, the DVIU has been deployed for three times.</p> <p>18 The first time was on 29 November to 3 December. Seven</p> <p>19 blocks of buildings affected by the fire and communal</p> <p>20 places have been searched, except 41 flats at risk. The</p> <p>21 second one, 4 December, there was -- you conducted</p> <p>22 search on other flats where they were categorised as</p> <p>23 risky before.</p> <p>24 MR CHENG KA CHUN: The 12 flats were not searched because in</p> <p>25 the same flats there might be more than one person. So</p>
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<p>1 human remains. The members of the DVIU, the majority of</p> <p>2 the members are the teaching staff of the detective</p> <p>3 training centre. Other members are police officers who</p> <p>4 have completed the standard training of the detective</p> <p>5 training centre.</p> <p>6 Having received that training, those police officers</p> <p>7 will return to their original duty. When an incident is</p> <p>8 categorised as catastrophe, then those members would be</p> <p>9 summoned to become members of the DVIU.</p> <p>10 MR VICTOR DAWES: Altogether, you have provided two witness</p> <p>11 statements concerning this incident. I believe</p> <p>12 you would confirm their accuracy. The second one is for</p> <p>13 supplementing some points in the first one.</p> <p>14 Paragraph 5 of your first statement, DVIU follows</p> <p>15 the standard of operation set out by Interpol. Can you</p> <p>16 expand on that?</p> <p>17 MR CHENG KA CHUN: The standard of operation can be divided</p> <p>18 into four areas. There are four groups. When we are</p> <p>19 mobilised, the four groups include the command centre,</p> <p>20 command post. So the major role of the command post is</p> <p>21 to compile the record of the entire incident and</p> <p>22 exchange the record and information departments and also</p> <p>23 issue direct command at the scene.</p> <p>24 The second group is the recovery team at the scene.</p> <p>25 The recovery team's main task, as the name suggests, is</p>	<p>1 when we were told there was still one person missing or</p> <p>2 we were told that a person has been rescued in the</p> <p>3 operation but we were only able to find one set of human</p> <p>4 remains, then we would return to the scene to conduct</p> <p>5 the search anew.</p> <p>6 If the information tells us that there are more than</p> <p>7 one person in the flats or, as you said, there are still</p> <p>8 missing persons from the flats which we were unable to</p> <p>9 find, we will return to the flats and conduct the search</p> <p>10 again.</p> <p>11 During the search for the missing persons, our goal</p> <p>12 is to locate all the persons reported missing. There</p> <p>13 may be more than one or two search.</p> <p>14 When we finally recovered the remains, it was the</p> <p>15 fifth time when we searched the flats. During those</p> <p>16 five visits, we removed all the debris, including</p> <p>17 collapsed cabinets, beds and so on. We removed them</p> <p>18 from the flats until there was only ash remaining. And</p> <p>19 then our colleagues used sieves to find the fractures of</p> <p>20 fragmented bones or teeth or part of the teeth from the</p> <p>21 victims. That's how we made sure our work is</p> <p>22 comprehensive and that we have missed no one.</p> <p>23 On the final visit we were able to find missing</p> <p>24 person number 168. That's victim number 168. That's</p> <p>25 because of the efforts of our teams. So all the missing</p>

<p>Page 149</p> <p>1 persons have been located.</p> <p>2 MR VICTOR DAWES: So during the workflow of the search, if</p> <p>3 human remains or suspected human tissues were found,</p> <p>4 you would fill in a form according to the standard of</p> <p>5 the Interpol. Please show us the form.</p> <p>6 I believe this is a form which you have been using</p> <p>7 for a long time. It has been used in previous</p> <p>8 disasters. So can you walk us through the workflow?</p> <p>9 MR CHENG KA CHUN: So this is the so-called postmortem form</p> <p>10 when human remains are found. You would take photo</p> <p>11 exhibits and also we would attach labels. The human</p> <p>12 remains, including the associated properties found near</p> <p>13 the remains, would be grouped together and placed into a</p> <p>14 bag, and then we would fill in the information on the</p> <p>15 tag. You would tag the human remains as well as the</p> <p>16 bag, and also there would be another sack that contain</p> <p>17 the human remains where we would also attach a tag.</p> <p>18 MR VICTOR DAWES: So by "human remains", it may mean some</p> <p>19 human tissue as well as other evidences. So what's</p> <p>20 next? Would you take it to -- for laboratory test?</p> <p>21 MR CHENG KA CHUN: When our recovery team identifies or</p> <p>22 found human remains, we would compile written records</p> <p>23 and take photos of the then situation of the remains.</p> <p>24 We would also mark the location, where it was found and</p> <p>25 also the associated properties, for example, a pair of</p>	<p>Page 151</p> <p>1 a Christina Cheung, a professor at the CUHK. She also</p> <p>2 rendered help.</p> <p>3 MR CHENG KA CHUN: Yes, from the flowchart you can see that</p> <p>4 there are 74 bodies or body parts. These were tissues</p> <p>5 which our team suspected to be human remains or body</p> <p>6 parts. We would collect them and ensure that there's</p> <p>7 nothing missing. So the 74 bodies or body parts, having</p> <p>8 been tested, it was found that 12 were an animal</p> <p>9 substance. For two, they are animal issues but not</p> <p>10 human issues. So from 74 it became 60 bodies or body</p> <p>11 parts.</p> <p>12 MR VICTOR DAWES: So two animals, I believe they are cats or</p> <p>13 dogs.</p> <p>14 MR CHENG KA CHUN: Yes.</p> <p>15 MR VICTOR DAWES: So among the 60 bodies or body part</p> <p>16 samples, it was later found that there are some</p> <p>17 overlapping, some samples have mixed with other samples.</p> <p>18 MR CHENG KA CHUN: Right. Among the 60 samples, sometimes</p> <p>19 in a pile of human remains there might be more than one</p> <p>20 set of human tissues. So subsequently we found that</p> <p>21 among five samples, they were from more than one victim.</p> <p>22 So in the end, there are 65 bodies or body parts. Among</p> <p>23 them, four body parts are duplicated with three existing</p> <p>24 victims. So there only remain 60 bodies or body parts,</p> <p>25 or 61. Among them, we have identified the victims by</p>
<p>Page 150</p> <p>1 glasses, jewellery, wristwatches, rings.</p> <p>2 MR VICTOR DAWES: Sorry to interrupt. If you look at the</p> <p>3 form, actually there are different spaces in the form</p> <p>4 for recording these information.</p> <p>5 MR CHENG KA CHUN: Correct. So after filling these</p> <p>6 information into the recovery form, the form would be</p> <p>7 sent to the collection post, temporary collection post,</p> <p>8 and then we would confirm the information with the</p> <p>9 recovery team to match all the information and make sure</p> <p>10 that they are a match.</p> <p>11 Subsequently, the human remains would be transferred</p> <p>12 to the public mortuary where our team would check the</p> <p>13 documents again. They would check information against</p> <p>14 the data we have and then fill in the postmortem form at</p> <p>15 the public mortuary. We would fill in all the</p> <p>16 information that we have on the form.</p> <p>17 MR VICTOR DAWES: Paragraph 27 of your witness statement,</p> <p>18 you mention in the entire operation 74 suspected human</p> <p>19 tissues have been found.</p> <p>20 In the annex you mention clearly, that's your second</p> <p>21 witness statement, you corrected your numbers. It seems</p> <p>22 that this flowchart tells us clearly the results. There</p> <p>23 are 12 body parts or 12 samples. After testing, there</p> <p>24 is no animal tissues. So that's 12 out of 74. I think</p> <p>25 that's in alignment with the FEHD's team, and also</p>	<p>Page 152</p> <p>1 primary identifiers, for example, DNA, fingerprints and</p> <p>2 dental record.</p> <p>3 So these are primary identifiers. The remaining</p> <p>4 one, that's number 169th victim, we found the skull of</p> <p>5 the victim but we were unable to retrieve any DNA or any</p> <p>6 identifier from the skull.</p> <p>7 MR VICTOR DAWES: Sorry to interrupt. I think you were</p> <p>8 mistaken. It was number 168.</p> <p>9 MR CHENG KA CHUN: Yes, I stand corrected. That's the skull</p> <p>10 of victim number 168. According to circumstantial</p> <p>11 evidence, we were able to confirm that the other set of</p> <p>12 human remains is victim number 168's mother. That's</p> <p>13 number 112, victim number 112. The skull belonged to</p> <p>14 that victim, so we believe that's the previous victim's</p> <p>15 mother.</p> <p>16 MR VICTOR DAWES: So we have read your evidence. Your</p> <p>17 evidence is very comprehensive. There are some</p> <p>18 speculations or sayings in the public that maybe the</p> <p>19 actual number of death exceeds 168. Based on your</p> <p>20 firsthand information, do you think there are evidences</p> <p>21 to support this speculation?</p> <p>22 MR CHENG KA CHUN: From my position, I think it's -- of</p> <p>23 course I can't say it's a 100 per cent impossible, but</p> <p>24 I think it's impossible to find evidence that there is</p> <p>25 more than 168 victims. The reason is that excluding</p>

<p>Page 153</p> <p>1 persons reported missing by their relatives, and also 2 missing persons with no enquiries made, when we 3 conducted this search, like I said, we have searched 4 every inch of the scene. Our team's purpose is to find 5 and identify the human remains. We have even found in 6 animal substance and also animal tissues. That's 7 because as long as we find suspected human tissues at 8 the scene, we will still collect it to make sure that we 9 are not leaving anyone behind. 10 So from my perspective, according to my judgment, 11 there would not be more than 168 victims. 12 MR VICTOR DAWES: If we summarise your two witness 13 statements, DVIU has found 168 victims as well as one 14 body part that was identified by the pathologist. 15 MR CHENG KA CHUN: Yes, that is number 168. As I said 16 earlier, in a particular unit, if we have information 17 that one is still missing, we do not have bodies or body 18 parts found of that individual. In the end, we have to 19 have DNA or fingerprint to confirm their identity or 20 odontological evidence to see if there is still anyone 21 missing or anyone reported missing is not found. And if 22 there is still an individual reported missing and if we 23 only found a set of human remains and only one person's 24 DNA is identified, we would continue with our efforts. 25 And on that occasion it was the forensic pathologist who</p>	<p>Page 155</p> <p>1 the families, I would like to thank the efforts of the 2 DVIU officers. 3 Thank you, Mr Cheng, for giving evidence today, 4 allowing the public to know about your work and your 5 contributions. 6 MR VICTOR DAWES: Sorry, I just want to add something. DVIU 7 deployed a total number of officers of 605? 8 MR CHENG KA CHUN: 605, correct. 9 MR VICTOR DAWES: Thank you. 10 (The witness was released) 11 (3.44 pm) 12 MR VICTOR DAWES: Chair, we have no other witnesses to call. 13 Should we resume the hearing at 10 in the morning 14 tomorrow? 15 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: We will resume the hearing at 16 10 am tomorrow. 17 (3.44 pm) 18 (The hearing adjourned until 10.00 am 19 on Thursday, 16 April 2026) 20 21 22 23 24 25</p>
<p>Page 154</p> <p>1 continued searching the area and found the remains of 2 number 168 in the list. 3 MR VICTOR DAWES: You have looked at the missing persons 4 reports and found that one was still missing. Well, 5 number 166 is not the last one, it's 161. So we have in 6 total 165 bodies, including that one, would be the total 7 number of deaths. 8 Based on some accusations, we have carefully 9 reviewed the evidence you have submitted. It is quite 10 difficult for us to review relevant evidence, so it is 11 hard for us -- so we can imagine how hard it is for you 12 to deal with this at the scene. We thank you for your 13 efforts. 14 That's it from me. 15 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: Any other questions from 16 involved parties? None? Mr Suen? 17 MR JENKIN SUEN: I have no questions. 18 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: Mr Cheng, let me say 19 something. For the DVIU, in major disasters, the DVIU 20 plays an important role in recovery work. This is very 21 important to the family members as well. The general 22 public would see news reports on the work of the DVIU 23 officers. Their work is definitely hard. Officers did 24 face great pressure. On behalf of the people of 25 Hong Kong, and if I may, I want to speak on behalf of</p>	