

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 18
Thursday, 23 April 2026**

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

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

Representatives of Department of Justice

Representatives of Competition Commission

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

Solicitor for Hop On Management Company Limited

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<p>1 Thursday, 23 April 2026</p> <p>2 (10.00 am)</p> <p>3 MR VICTOR DAWES: Chairman, the next witness is Mr Tung Wing</p> <p>4 Kei.</p> <p>5 Mr Tung, good morning. Just like what your</p> <p>6 colleagues did, please be upstanding and read out the</p> <p>7 declaration in front of you.</p> <p>8 (10.00 am)</p> <p>9 MR TUNG WING KEI (affirmed)</p> <p>10 Examination by MR VICTOR DAWES</p> <p>11 MR VICTOR DAWES: Thank you. Mr Tung, we know that you're</p> <p>12 in charge of breathing apparatus, hence you can provide</p> <p>13 your assistance to us in relation to firemen's kit.</p> <p>14 MR TUNG WING KEI: Right.</p> <p>15 MR VICTOR DAWES: You have been serving in the FSD for a</p> <p>16 very long time. We see that you joined in 2002, serving</p> <p>17 in the department for 24 years. You have also been</p> <p>18 working in the field, that is in relation to equipment,</p> <p>19 for quite some time.</p> <p>20 MR TUNG WING KEI: Altogether six years.</p> <p>21 MR VICTOR DAWES: You have given us two witness statements,</p> <p>22 WS4 and WS15. I believe you checked the statements and</p> <p>23 confirmed the contents therein?</p> <p>24 MR TUNG WING KEI: Right.</p> <p>25 MR VICTOR DAWES: There are questions on firefighters'</p>	<p>1 your colleagues explained, it depends on the personal</p> <p>2 consumption of the person as well as the frequency of</p> <p>3 breathing, but 33 minutes is an approximate?</p> <p>4 MR TUNG WING KEI: Right, 33 minutes of working time.</p> <p>5 MR VICTOR DAWES: And the total weight is 13.5 kilograms?</p> <p>6 MR TUNG WING KEI: Right.</p> <p>7 MR VICTOR DAWES: In your second statement paragraph 6,</p> <p>8 WS15/2196, this is an improved system, an upgraded</p> <p>9 system. The previous version gave a 28-minute working</p> <p>10 time. Perhaps you can explain to us the improvement by</p> <p>11 comparing the two versions.</p> <p>12 MR TUNG WING KEI: For MSA 8-litre air cylinder, it was</p> <p>13 introduced in 2014. Before that it was a 6.7-litre</p> <p>14 cylinder. Before that, back in 2010, there was a study</p> <p>15 conducted. Findings show that 8-litre was the most</p> <p>16 suitable. The superiority of this is a larger volume</p> <p>17 and a 20 per cent increase in air volume with a lighter</p> <p>18 weight, that is from 7.5 kilo to 7.3 kilo. So with a</p> <p>19 reduction in weight, the air duration is longer because</p> <p>20 of advancement in technology.</p> <p>21 MR VICTOR DAWES: Let's take a look at paragraph 9. Here</p> <p>22 you talk about in relation to air cylinders -- in</p> <p>23 January this year, there was the introduction of a new</p> <p>24 BA system. Can you explain that to us?</p> <p>25 MR TUNG WING KEI: The MSA equipment has been in use for</p>
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<p>1 equipment in relation to the fire. I'd like to ask you</p> <p>2 some questions.</p> <p>3 One of such equipment is very important to your</p> <p>4 colleagues, that is the breathing apparatus, BA. You</p> <p>5 have talked about them in your witness statement, but</p> <p>6 I would like to ask for your help. At B9/4783, your</p> <p>7 witness statement. This is a document supplied by your</p> <p>8 department. This is a picture of the breathing</p> <p>9 apparatus. It clearly shows a number of components.</p> <p>10 You have explained in your witness statement. We see</p> <p>11 the harness, the air cylinder and tubes attached to the</p> <p>12 cylinder, a mask, as well as a hose linked to the mask.</p> <p>13 These are the components; right?</p> <p>14 MR TUNG WING KEI: Right.</p> <p>15 MR VICTOR DAWES: Previously, the Committee has talked about</p> <p>16 these issues with your colleagues but you may be the</p> <p>17 best person to answer questions. First, about the</p> <p>18 volume of the cylinder. In your latest witness</p> <p>19 statement you have given an explanation. In Wang Fuk</p> <p>20 Court, 8-litre cylinders were used. It seems it's been</p> <p>21 in use for quite some time?</p> <p>22 MR TUNG WING KEI: Right. May 2014, when it was introduced,</p> <p>23 all the way to January 2026.</p> <p>24 MR VICTOR DAWES: Information shows that in theory,</p> <p>25 firefighters can use it for 33 minutes. However, as</p>	<p>1 15 years. In 2026 we replaced a new brand, Interspiro</p> <p>2 BA. With advancement in technology, the use of material</p> <p>3 and the design has resulted in a reduction from 7.3 kg</p> <p>4 to 7.1 kg with 500 bar, and the working duration is also</p> <p>5 33 minutes.</p> <p>6 MR VICTOR DAWES: Now let's turn to part B of your statement</p> <p>7 starting from page 2197. You explain to us that there</p> <p>8 are BA equipment with a longer working time. However,</p> <p>9 it was deemed that it would not serve any substantial</p> <p>10 effect, that's why it was not used, and there would be</p> <p>11 continuous improvement. Can you give us more</p> <p>12 information about the equipment?</p> <p>13 MR TUNG WING KEI: As you said, yes, there are BA equipment</p> <p>14 that would give us a longer working duration, but it's</p> <p>15 not suitable in that circumstance. There is the CCBA,</p> <p>16 yes, it would give us working duration of three hours</p> <p>17 but it's not suitable in environment with high radiation</p> <p>18 heat as well as high-temperature naked flame.</p> <p>19 The second one is airliner. It's in a tube. In</p> <p>20 theory, if a tube is connected to outside the scene,</p> <p>21 there will be a continuous replacement of cylinder,</p> <p>22 giving an unlimited duration for work. But, given the</p> <p>23 circumstances at Wang Fuk Court, firefighters would have</p> <p>24 to carry the BA going up the stairs; the hose or the</p> <p>25 pipe will not be free from getting tangled.</p>

Page 5	<p>1 The third one is the TCBA. Currently, under our</p> <p>2 system, it's a single cylinder. Under TCBA, it's a twin</p> <p>3 cylinder. The weight will increase from 13.5 kilos to</p> <p>4 over 20 kilograms, which is a heavy load.</p> <p>5 When it comes to actual use, we have to consider</p> <p>6 that with a heavier weight, firefighters will have to</p> <p>7 climb stairs. So the toll on the firefighters' physique</p> <p>8 and the consumption of air will increase. It may not be</p> <p>9 conducive.</p> <p>10 In addition to that, we also have to balance another</p> <p>11 factor. Working in a fire, that is a high-temperature</p> <p>12 environment, 33 minutes is already a long time. The</p> <p>13 longer the working duration, the higher the physical</p> <p>14 toll. It may also result in errors in judgment, injury</p> <p>15 or even fatality working in a high-temperature</p> <p>16 environment.</p> <p>17 MR VICTOR DAWES: This is the issue related to the cylinder.</p> <p>18 You've also talked to us about a mask and other</p> <p>19 components, B9/4784. Here we see the mask currently</p> <p>20 used. It says here there is a VoiceCom. It's a kind of</p> <p>21 amplifier?</p> <p>22 MR TUNG WING KEI: Right.</p> <p>23 MR VICTOR DAWES: And there is also a display. When the</p> <p>24 mask is worn, then the remaining time is shown.</p> <p>25 MR TUNG WING KEI: Yes. There is something called an HUD,</p>	Page 7
Page 6	<p>1 heads-up display. It's inside the mask.</p> <p>2 MR VICTOR DAWES: According to the information supplied by</p> <p>3 you, there are two switches, one for the cylinder to</p> <p>4 control the output of air from the cylinder, the other</p> <p>5 is called a demand valve, that is the supply into the</p> <p>6 mask. There are two valves?</p> <p>7 MR TUNG WING KEI: Yes. The demand valve is the supply of</p> <p>8 air. When it's used, the colleague will have to first</p> <p>9 turn on the main switch from the cylinder and then turn</p> <p>10 on the demand valve for supply of air.</p> <p>11 MR VICTOR DAWES: There is another component. Look at the</p> <p>12 page after this. There is something called alphaMITTER.</p> <p>13 Can you explain to us what this device is used for?</p> <p>14 MR TUNG WING KEI: This is a radio transmitter. It connects</p> <p>15 the alpha HUB as well as the heads-up display. It is</p> <p>16 not a wired connection but a wireless connection. The</p> <p>17 information of remaining air in a cylinder will be</p> <p>18 transmitted to the heads-up display. The colleague can</p> <p>19 see from the display inside the mask how much time is</p> <p>20 left. And MITTER will also transmit data to SCOUT. So</p> <p>21 the remaining time is also shown, the remaining content</p> <p>22 is shown.</p> <p>23 MR VICTOR DAWES: What is alphaSCOUT?</p> <p>24 MR TUNG WING KEI: It is the one shown on the picture. It</p> <p>25 is a personal alarm system. When it comes to the</p>	Page 8
	<p>1 personal alarm system --</p> <p>2 MR VICTOR DAWES: This is the one that we see?</p> <p>3 MR TUNG WING KEI: Yes.</p> <p>4 MR VICTOR DAWES: How does it work?</p> <p>5 MR TUNG WING KEI: It will sound an alarm under two</p> <p>6 circumstances. One, the white alarm button, that is</p> <p>7 when the colleague is in distress, it can be pressed</p> <p>8 manually. The other circumstance is that when</p> <p>9 alphaSCOUT detects motionless for over 30 seconds, that</p> <p>10 means it's possible that the person is in distress.</p> <p>11 A motion alarm will be automatically triggered, sending</p> <p>12 out a distress call. Apart from this alarm system there</p> <p>13 are also a number of displays, that is the air content,</p> <p>14 which is most important, that is the remaining content</p> <p>15 of the cylinder.</p> <p>16 Just now, when we said when it was fully filled, it</p> <p>17 was 300 bar. When it's used, the firefighter will see</p> <p>18 a drop in the number of bars, reminding the colleague</p> <p>19 when to leave the scene.</p> <p>20 MR VICTOR DAWES: Another important device is at B9/4944.</p> <p>21 This one here is called firefighter locator system, FLS.</p> <p>22 MR TUNG WING KEI: Yes.</p> <p>23 MR VICTOR DAWES: From the information you supplied, after a</p> <p>24 fire in a mini-storage area in 2016, this was</p> <p>25 introduced. Can you explain to us how it works?</p>	

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<p>1 MR TUNG WING KEI: Well, when a firefighter carries the BA 2 equipment with them to the scene, they will go through 3 an entry control point where there is an entry control 4 officer. There will be a checklist conducted to ensure 5 safety. One of the work is to hand the red key to the 6 entry control officer to ensure that the PT is activated 7 before the officer is allowed to enter the scene. 8 MR VICTOR DAWES: Colleagues will go through training before 9 they're allowed to use the equipment, so your colleagues 10 will be familiar with the different parts and the use of 11 the equipment; is that right? 12 MR TUNG WING KEI: Right. 13 MR VICTOR DAWES: Mr Ho Wai Ho unfortunately passed away in 14 the fire. The witness statements given to the police by 15 your colleagues, there is one from Fanling Fire Station, 16 Mr Chau Yiu Chung, a station officer. He mentioned that 17 on 27 November, at about 1.30 am, they found that they 18 could not reach the rooftop of Wang Tai House, but they 19 went to the corridor of the 31st floor of Wang Tai 20 House. In the middle of the corridor, somewhere off the 21 lift door, they found a breathing apparatus of 22 Ho Wai Ho. In addition, they found a helmet and a mask. 23 That is page 4801. It's a statement given to the 24 police. 25 There is also a glove, or gauntlet, and a hammer</p>	<p>1 and damaged handwheel. Can you explain to us the 2 function of these parts, where they are and what was the 3 condition when they were found? 4 MR TUNG WING KEI: There are two parts to the cylinder, the 5 body of the cylinder and the valve and the valve is on 6 top, that's the switch. And there is the handwheel 7 there on the third photo, that is to switch it on and 8 off. 9 MR VICTOR DAWES: Here it said there is some damage. 10 I don't think it is a common sight. 11 MR TUNG WING KEI: It is a rare occurrence. 12 MR VICTOR DAWES: You've checked these components. Can you 13 say in the light of your experience why they were 14 damaged? 15 MR TUNG WING KEI: We see the handwheel that became 16 detached. Normally, it is screwed on. It is metal, it 17 is hard to be damaged like this. As I said in my 18 report, one of the possibilities is a very severe 19 impact. It may be made of metal, but upon strong 20 impact, it may be broken. One of the possibilities is 21 that it was dropped on the floor and it was broken, or 22 when someone passes through a narrow environment and it 23 got broken. Also there is a possibility that when the 24 colleague was wearing this, he slipped and fell over and 25 broke the device. That is less of a possibility; it</p>
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<p>1 that were placed on the edge of the window. Mr Chau 2 also said that the BA of Ho Wai Ho was tested and the 3 supply of air was operational. 4 The team checked the BA and found that the 5 alphaSCOUT and cylinder seem to be damaged. There was 6 no bar in the display. That is, no air inside. You've 7 looked into this situation by an investigation because a 8 firefighter died in the execution of duty. You have 9 carried out quite comprehensive reporting. The report 10 has been given to the Committee. You were involved in 11 that report as well. Let's look at B9/4779. 12 The first thing I'd like to touch on is when the 13 breathing apparatus was found, Mr Chau Yiu Chung saw 14 that the mask was separated from the breathing apparatus 15 equipment. Under normal circumstances, would they be 16 separated? 17 MR TUNG WING KEI: Yes, normally they will be separated. If 18 the set is removed, the first thing is to detach the 19 demand valve, then the mask will be detached from the 20 cylinder. 21 MR VICTOR DAWES: So if it's detached, there is a 22 possibility it was detached when it was removed? 23 MR TUNG WING KEI: Right. 24 MR VICTOR DAWES: Let's go to page 4793. There are some 25 pictures showing that there is a damaged cylinder valve</p>	<p>1 would be rare. 2 Look at the top photo. There is this plastic thing, 3 a cushion on top. It is a cushion against impact. 4 Other than the cylinder, there is also the cushion 5 against impact, it is rubber wrapping to cushion the 6 impact. 7 As to whether we can confirm how it got broken, as 8 I said, you have the alphaSCOUT, and alphaSCOUT will 9 record the consumption of air. 10 AlphaSCOUT was damaged. We tried to retrieve the 11 information through the supplier, but the data got lost 12 somehow. 13 MR VICTOR DAWES: Thank you. 6.1.1, page 4791. You've 14 checked the equipment. There are a couple of things you 15 mentioned. Item (iii): 16 "No burn marks were noted on the BA set ..." 17 So it wasn't burnt at all. 18 MR TUNG WING KEI: Correct. 19 MR VICTOR DAWES: "The BA set tally was attached to the 20 alphaSCOUT." 21 That's item (xii) on the following page. Can you 22 elaborate on this one? That's attached to the 23 alphaSCOUT. 24 MR TUNG WING KEI: Further down, please. alphaSCOUT is on 25 the right-hand side, that's There's the black bit</p>

Page 13	<p>1 hanging to the strap. The white thing is the BA set</p> <p>2 tally. In theory, after passing through the entry</p> <p>3 control point, the PT plus has a red key, the red key</p> <p>4 plus the tally would be handed over to the entry control</p> <p>5 point. If it is still hanging there, presumably he</p> <p>6 wasn't walking through an entry control point.</p> <p>7 MR VICTOR DAWES: Point 14:</p> <p>8 "Personal transmitter with magnetic key attached</p> <p>9 were intact."</p> <p>10 And figure 19, page 4795, you've explained that</p> <p>11 there is the red key there.</p> <p>12 MR TUNG WING KEI: Yes.</p> <p>13 MR VICTOR DAWES: It is inserted. What does it mean? Can</p> <p>14 you elaborate on this, please?</p> <p>15 MR TUNG WING KEI: It means that the gadget is not on. When</p> <p>16 he is making a distress call, of course you can unplug</p> <p>17 the red key, it would be okay. There is a motionless</p> <p>18 alarm. If the red key is inserted, it would not be</p> <p>19 activated.</p> <p>20 MR VICTOR DAWES: So for the BA tally -- presumably, like</p> <p>21 the BA tally, the red key would be unplugged and handed</p> <p>22 over to the control point?</p> <p>23 MR TUNG WING KEI: Yes.</p> <p>24 MR VICTOR DAWES: "No rescue knife was found in the pouch."</p> <p>25 In other words, if you take a look at these</p>	Page 15
Page 14	<p>1 equipment, you can rule out the possibility that the</p> <p>2 equipment was burned and rendered inoperable?</p> <p>3 MR TUNG WING KEI: Right. No burn mark there.</p> <p>4 MR VICTOR DAWES: In your first statement paragraph 7.7</p> <p>5 you've offered some explanation. In Mr Ho's case, the</p> <p>6 system wasn't activated, but in fact it wouldn't make</p> <p>7 any difference because on the 30th floor, the ground</p> <p>8 level colleagues, because of sheer distance, would not</p> <p>9 be able to detect the location of Mr Ho. Perhaps you</p> <p>10 can explain a little bit more here.</p> <p>11 MR TUNG WING KEI: As I said, if the distress signal is --</p> <p>12 there will be some signal transmitted, but because of</p> <p>13 the distance -- this is not the main thing in this case,</p> <p>14 that he is on the 30th or 31st floor. On the ground</p> <p>15 level there is a lot of concrete layers and the concrete</p> <p>16 layers would be absorbing the radio signals. So on the</p> <p>17 ground floor there would be no receipt of the signal.</p> <p>18 MR VICTOR DAWES: Can I say this, that the system or the</p> <p>19 gadget was not on Mr Ho; it was taken off him when he</p> <p>20 was found.</p> <p>21 MR TUNG WING KEI: Right.</p> <p>22 MR VICTOR DAWES: We see the FLS. It was taken off and left</p> <p>23 on the 31st floor.</p> <p>24 MR TUNG WING KEI: Yes.</p> <p>25 MR VICTOR DAWES: So separated from the fireman. So it</p>	Page 16
	<p>1 would not happen like this normally.</p> <p>2 MR TUNG WING KEI: Right.</p> <p>3 MR VICTOR DAWES: Obviously in Hong Kong there are so many</p> <p>4 high rises. In this kind of situation, the FLS will not</p> <p>5 be able to detect a signal and there is room for</p> <p>6 improvement there?</p> <p>7 MR TUNG WING KEI: Yes, for sure. The department is in the</p> <p>8 process of procuring a new system. Even before the</p> <p>9 incident we were doing just that.</p> <p>10 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: Any improvement in the new</p> <p>11 system in terms of detection? Would it have better</p> <p>12 capacity?</p> <p>13 MR TUNG WING KEI: Let me put it this way. This is also</p> <p>14 using radio signals, but it would be using two different</p> <p>15 signals. It has a high frequency and low frequency.</p> <p>16 The low frequency signal is good because it can</p> <p>17 penetrate better. It can make turns. With this one,</p> <p>18 it's all about the strength or intensity of the signal.</p> <p>19 With a new one, we can have the direction, we can have</p> <p>20 the arrow pointing the direction. It can also show the</p> <p>21 distance between me and the one being rescued. It would</p> <p>22 be useful in this case because it would show the height</p> <p>23 differential between me and the one being rescued.</p> <p>24 Let's say 30th floor, it may be 90 metres, I know that</p> <p>25 he must be upstairs. With the present one, it doesn't</p>	
	<p>1 have this functionality.</p> <p>2 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: How high would it be in terms</p> <p>3 of the signal range? Have you conducted an assessment</p> <p>4 how high up can you reach?</p> <p>5 MR TUNG WING KEI: We conducted some assessment recently.</p> <p>6 We tested the new and the old devices on the 23rd floor.</p> <p>7 The old system cannot receive any signal, not to mention</p> <p>8 30th floor. For the new one, it can pick up the signal.</p> <p>9 MR VICTOR DAWES: In terms of distance, and obviously I know</p> <p>10 that there are barriers in the Hong Kong situation, what</p> <p>11 is the signal range like?</p> <p>12 MR TUNG WING KEI: The linear range, 800 metres without</p> <p>13 obstruction.</p> <p>14 MR VICTOR DAWES: Right. Unobstructed situation.</p> <p>15 MR TUNG WING KEI: Right.</p> <p>16 MR VICTOR DAWES: Of course there are some barriers in real</p> <p>17 life.</p> <p>18 MR TUNG WING KEI: Right.</p> <p>19 MR VICTOR DAWES: If you can assist us on this: Mr Ho's</p> <p>20 whereabouts and he took off the BA, we received evidence</p> <p>21 that shows that at 15:15 hours Mr Ho was in Wang Tai</p> <p>22 House, 25th floor, and 15:12 he was on the 30th floor</p> <p>23 issuing the distress signal and the BA was found on the</p> <p>24 31st floor. At the 31st floor the window was broken.</p> <p>25 So it seems that there is evidence to say that he may</p>	

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<p>1 have climbed out of the scaffolding on the 31st floor. 2 Can you respond to this? 3 MR TUNG WING KEI: I am responsible for the BA and as to 4 what happened, in actual fact, maybe some other 5 colleagues would be in a better position to provide the 6 information. 7 MR VICTOR DAWES: Just to let everyone know what we are 8 talking about -- I know that other colleagues may be in 9 a better position to answer this but to let people know 10 what we are talking about. B5/3218. We can see the 11 broken window there. Shrink down a little bit, please. 12 Regarding the BA device worn by firemen -- you will 13 be familiar with the dimension. Mr Ho is a man of big 14 build. If you look at this window, he would not be able 15 to get out with all the gear on him; agree? 16 MR TUNG WING KEI: Yes. 17 MR VICTOR DAWES: I fully appreciate that this may involve 18 your judgment, but will you tell us, in your judgment 19 the device was broken, therefore he took it off and he 20 fled for life through the window? Do you have any 21 evidence? 22 MR TUNG WING KEI: Our understanding is it's not because of 23 the device. Like we said in the report, the BA set will 24 be tested every six months and it was in October that 25 this was done. There is also the daily test; the</p>	<p>1 watermark and there was some signs of water there. An 2 engineer tried to unscrew it and open the SCOUT and it 3 was found that the battery -- there was a lot of rust 4 stains near the battery. The circuit board was also 5 exposed to water. It seems that it was exposed to water 6 in the fire scene and it was broken like this. 7 The SCOUT had some waterproofing ability, but it is 8 no more than 1 metre deep for 30 minutes. 9 The colleague who found this BA set told us that the 10 set was found on the rooftop and the rooftop was 11 waterlogged, about 10 to 20 cm deep and the BA said that 12 the SCOUT was soaked in water. It probably has been 13 there for more than 17 hours before it was retrieved so 14 water might have seeped into the device. 15 MR VICTOR DAWES: Understood. Be that as it may, from the 16 evidence we know why the fireman went up to that level: 17 he got the message that he had to rescue someone. 18 MR TUNG WING KEI: Correct. 19 MR VICTOR DAWES: Regarding the BA, you have compiled a 20 detailed report and you have given us a very thorough 21 explanation to the hearing and also the members of the 22 public. Is there anything you'd like to add to the 23 report, which is very comprehensive indeed? 24 MR TUNG WING KEI: Not for the time being. 25 MR VICTOR DAWES: One more thing I'd like to seek your</p>
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<p>1 colleague will be testing the equipment on a daily 2 basis. According to the record, Mr Ho Wai Ho, that 3 morning he conducted the daily test. 4 MR VICTOR DAWES: Right. Let me clarify. The evidence 5 doesn't say that the equipment was broken when he went 6 in, but in the fire scene it was broken. Can I put it 7 this way, the damage -- and we saw the evidence, why he 8 did that we don't have any further evidence what 9 happened. Would it be fair to say this? 10 MR TUNG WING KEI: Yes. Like we said a moment ago, the 11 cylinder was damaged. It might have been caused by 12 impact, but here the alphaSCOUT was damaged and the 13 data couldn't be retrieved. If we have the opportunity 14 to see the data, we would have some conclusion. But as 15 to whether it was damaged during use or after use, or 16 how it was damaged, we don't have any particular 17 evidence. 18 MR VICTOR DAWES: You mentioned the SCOUT, it was damaged. 19 Do you have any causes? Was it exposed to water or 20 impact or what? 21 MR TUNG WING KEI: For the BA set, on the 27th or the 28th, 22 it was sent to the BA room and on 1 December we have 23 called upon the manufacturer to come to the Shatin 24 centre to conduct a test and we tried to get hold of 25 information but we couldn't start it. There was some</p>	<p>1 assistance is, when a fireman enters the fire scene, 2 there is the entry control officer handling the entry 3 and there is a logbook recording the entry and the state 4 of the BA. 5 MR TUNG WING KEI: Yes. 6 MR VICTOR DAWES: This entry control officer -- what other 7 things that are logged and what is the duty? 8 MR TUNG WING KEI: The officer has to record the ins and 9 outs of the officers and before entry, there is an 10 operational log. 11 MR VICTOR DAWES: Let me show you the log first. This is 12 the one? 13 MR TUNG WING KEI: Yes. 14 MR VICTOR DAWES: There are some marks there. Is it really 15 on a plastic board? 16 MR TUNG WING KEI: Yes, it is a plastic board. 17 MR VICTOR DAWES: So using the whiteboard marker? 18 MR TUNG WING KEI: No, because if you use a marker then it's 19 not good, and therefore we use some crayons to do it. 20 Upon entry, the ECO would fill in the details of the 21 officer or the fireman, for example, who is from Shatin 22 station and for the BA there's also a serial number, 23 that would also be jotted down. At the same time there 24 would be these ticks, so that's the checklist. So 25 before entry into the fire scene, he would have to</p>

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1 ensure that the fireman has had all these done.
 2 So he would have to make sure that he has donned the
 3 protective equipment properly and also the SCOUT is
 4 properly turned on and also the PT is to make sure the
 5 red magnetic key has been taken out and also there is
 6 also an identification card, so that's the alpha tag, to
 7 register the personal particulars and also the personal
 8 log. That's to make sure the device is turned on and
 9 also he has donned the personal protective equipment
 10 properly. That's the air cylinder; it has to be turned
 11 on, and also, in terms of the air content, you can see
 12 that is 300 bars. And then on the top right-hand corner
 13 you have this table, that is there's 300 bars, then the
 14 working hours would be 33 minutes. In other words, this
 15 colleague, normally speaking, theoretically he should be
 16 able to remain in the fire scene for 33 minutes.
 17 And then, at the time, it was jotted down that it
 18 would be for 29 minutes because we have a team of crew
 19 members entering the fire scene, and therefore we would
 20 use the air cylinder with the lowest air content as the
 21 maximum, that is 280 on this occasion, or 270, and if
 22 you check it on the table, then he should be allowed to
 23 stay in the fire scene for 29, 30 minutes.
 24 His start hour would also be marked. So there is an
 25 estimate as to, for example, if he entered the scene at

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1 2.35, then if you add 29 minutes, then he would have to
 2 come out by 3.29, and there would also be the assigned
 3 duties, on the right-hand side.
 4 MR VICTOR DAWES: To make sure this log is complete, that's
 5 the duty of the ECO, the entry control officer?
 6 MR TUNG WING KEI: Correct.
 7 MR VICTOR DAWES: Obviously the reason why you have to take
 8 all these steps, that's to ensure that the equipment is
 9 properly donned, and also there is a record as to who
 10 has entered the fire scene and also for how long he will
 11 stay in the fire scene.
 12 MR TUNG WING KEI: Right.
 13 MR VICTOR DAWES: And also, all the records will have to be
 14 complete. The device would be operating properly;
 15 that's something that has to be checked before entering
 16 the fire scene?
 17 MR TUNG WING KEI: Correct.
 18 MR VICTOR DAWES: Also, you would also have to register the
 19 in and out time because they would have to go in
 20 together and come out together. So for the officer with
 21 the lowest air content, that would be the cap as to how
 22 long they would be permitted to stay. As you can see,
 23 most of them stay there up to the maximum permitted
 24 time.
 25 MR TUNG WING KEI: Yes, correct.

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1 MR VICTOR DAWES: So that's the usual practice. This is
 2 a handwritten table. Where would it be placed?
 3 MR TUNG WING KEI: This table or this clipboard would be
 4 placed on every fire appliance, that's the hydraulic
 5 platform, and also at the front of it there is a
 6 platform for placing such logs.
 7 MR VICTOR DAWES: So your evidence, when we talk about the
 8 equipment, we can guess that the BA log on that day,
 9 well, you have actually filled up all the spaces.
 10 MR TUNG WING KEI: Yes, correct.
 11 MR VICTOR DAWES: At the time, because of the environmental
 12 factors, in copying the details, there might have been
 13 mistakes made?
 14 MR TUNG WING KEI: Yes. Because on that day this was a very
 15 big fire and there were many people and commanders
 16 involved at the fire scene, and therefore, in terms of
 17 the records, there might have been some errors and
 18 mistakes and so on. As to the reason why this could
 19 happen, well, probably because the log table was
 20 completely filled up because there were too many people
 21 entering fire scene and for this particular log we had
 22 never expected to encounter such a big fire. And when
 23 the logs are used up, when the firemen came out from the
 24 fire scene, then the importance of the log would not
 25 have been that important and therefore the ECO might

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1 have chosen to erase the earlier record so that he could
 2 write down new records, and that's the reason why some
 3 of the records would be missing. Also, he might also
 4 have jotted down the details by pen and paper on other
 5 sheets and that might have been lost.
 6 MR VICTOR DAWES: So, to keep complete records would of
 7 course be very important in our view and I'm sure
 8 you would also consider whether or not there is any
 9 review on this.
 10 MR TUNG WING KEI: Yes, indeed, before the fire we were
 11 already attempting to look at products available in the
 12 market to see how we can enhance that practice.
 13 If I might elaborate a bit, we would also be
 14 introducing an electronic clipboard or command log so
 15 that as soon as he enters, then the log would start.
 16 That would also avoid the need to write it down by hand
 17 and there might also be mistakes in terms of the manual
 18 records.
 19 MR VICTOR DAWES: To reconstruct the operational records,
 20 some of the records might have been lost, so in this
 21 case you don't have to erase some of the records because
 22 there might not have been that many firemen entering or
 23 coming out from the fire scene, so there is room for
 24 improvement.
 25 MR TUNG WING KEI: Yes. With regard to the internal

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1 guidelines and also the departmental practice, we would
 2 also be updating that from time to time, in particular,
 3 after this massive fire.
 4 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: So you said that you'd be
 5 considering introducing this electronic control system.
 6 Actually, before the fire, you were already studying
 7 that?
 8 MR TUNG WING KEI: Yes, correct.
 9 MR VICTOR DAWES: Okay. I'd also like to put it to you,
 10 that is according to the information that you provide,
 11 back in 2023 --
 12 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: I'd like to ask one more
 13 question. In terms of the getting of resources, had
 14 there been any difficulties?
 15 MR TUNG WING KEI: No, none whatsoever. Because we have
 16 already bid for funds for that.
 17 MR VICTOR DAWES: Yes, resources would sometimes be
 18 a problem.
 19 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: Yes, indeed. If there are
 20 resources difficulties, then of course the Commission
 21 could also make suggestions as to the funding for such
 22 equipment, but then I believe that funding or resources
 23 would be adequate when you ask for that.
 24 MR TUNG WING KEI: Yes. Thank you.
 25 MR VICTOR DAWES: Another thing that I'd like to seek your

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1 assistance on. Another device that you've also looked
 2 at, you have the FSD indoor locator system. Can you
 3 also explain that a bit to us as to how it operates?
 4 MR TUNG WING KEI: Are you referring to the indoor
 5 firefighter locator system?
 6 MR VICTOR DAWES: Was that the one that you referred to when
 7 you tried to enhance, FILE?
 8 MR TUNG WING KEI: That's another system. That's what our
 9 department worked with one of the universities on and
 10 then a company managed to win the bid. Now the
 11 department had around eight to 10 such devices. What is
 12 it about? Well, actually, at the fire scene, that's to
 13 locate the firemen as to their whereabouts so that when
 14 we conduct SAR, the search and rescue operation,
 15 we would be able to locate him. As to how that's used,
 16 in fact, at the -- well, within the sole of the boots
 17 that he put on, then for every step that he takes and
 18 also the direction he has taken would also be shown on
 19 the record. And then, outside of the fire scene, we
 20 would be able to find out his location and also his
 21 whereabouts within the fire scene.
 22 In the event that something untoward happened to
 23 him, then we would be able to locate him.
 24 MR VICTOR DAWES: So according to the information -- well,
 25 if the FILE system that was also used previously back in

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1 2023; there was a No. 3 alarm fire in Lau Fau Shan, and
 2 also in April 2024, at Hung Shiu Kiu, there was this
 3 No. 4 alarm and it was also used.
 4 MR TUNG WING KEI: Yes.
 5 MR VICTOR DAWES: So I'd like to know whether or not it was
 6 used on this occasion?
 7 MR TUNG WING KEI: Not that I'm aware of.
 8 MR VICTOR DAWES: Mr Tung, thank you very much for your
 9 evidence. Your evidence is very useful to us in our
 10 investigation. Thank you for your assistance.
 11 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: Do other involved parties
 12 have any questions for him, for Mr Tung?
 13 What about the Government?
 14 MR JENKIN SUEN: No, we have no questions.
 15 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: Okay. Thank you, Mr Tung,
 16 for your evidence. Thank you for your assistance. Has
 17 very useful. Thank you.
 18 (The witness was released)
 19 (10.50 am)
 20 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: Our next witness, would we
 21 like to continue?
 22 MR VICTOR DAWES: We don't have specific view on this,
 23 Mr Chairman. Our next witness will take some time to
 24 finish.
 25 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: Okay. Let's start.

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1 MR VICTOR DAWES: The next witness is Mr Chan, Derek
 2 Armstrong. He's the deputy director.
 3 Mr Chan, good morning. As your colleagues have
 4 done, can you stand up and read out the declaration.
 5 (10.51 am)
 6 MR CHAN HING YUNG, DEREK ARMSTRONG (affirmed)
 7 Examination by MR VICTOR DAWES
 8 MR VICTOR DAWES: Thank you. You may now sit down.
 9 Mr Chan, according to the information, you joined
 10 the Fire Services Department in 1998, so you have
 11 already worked for the department for 27 years?
 12 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes.
 13 MR VICTOR DAWES: In 2023 you were promoted to the rank of
 14 deputy director (operations)?
 15 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes, correct.
 16 MR VICTOR DAWES: We saw that you're responsible for
 17 managing different districts and also in terms of
 18 administrative assistance and also operational support
 19 and professional development and fire command and
 20 ambulance command; is that right?
 21 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes.
 22 MR VICTOR DAWES: Can you confirm the content of your
 23 witness statement at WS8/1921 is correct?
 24 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes.
 25 MR VICTOR DAWES: Paragraph 8 of your witness statement. At

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1 15:02 you were notified and the fire was already
 2 escalated to No. 3 alarm. Before the escalation or
 3 before 15:01, you already noticed how the fire developed
 4 in terms of the timeline; is that right?
 5 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Correct.
 6 MR VICTOR DAWES: And you also said that some 50 assistance
 7 calls were already received, you knew that the fire
 8 already spread to Wang Tai House and then the FSD
 9 already sent out 13 appliances and also 61 firemen to
 10 the scene?
 11 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes.
 12 MR VICTOR DAWES: I'd like to show you this, to make it
 13 easier for us to all understand in terms of how you
 14 dealt with the fire and also the difficulties that you
 15 encountered. I'd like to show you a picture.
 16 Can we blow it up a bit.
 17 Okay. The picture shows here, as you can see, on
 18 top of that you have some marks. So that's the
 19 Commission experts after looking at the evidence that we
 20 received so far and also the clips provided to us by the
 21 FSD or other sources.
 22 In fact, as you can see, very often when a block is
 23 on fire, during the initial stage, when you see the seat
 24 of fire, very often that would be from the light well
 25 and therefore here we can see the kind of situation that

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1 you were facing at the time for every block.
 2 In the light well, when there were already pillars
 3 of fire or flames, you can see that the spread of the
 4 fire was very rapid. We can keep this picture on the
 5 screen so that you'd be able to see exactly the kind of
 6 situation that you had to deal with.
 7 I'd like to ask you this, that is, according to your
 8 experience, we understand that within around 10 minutes
 9 it had already spread from the first block to the second
 10 block. So given the years of experience that you have
 11 with the FSD, have you ever encountered a situation
 12 whereby within such a short space of time so many blocks
 13 would be involved?
 14 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: No, never.
 15 MR VICTOR DAWES: Very often there would be one single block
 16 that was involved in the fire. No other blocks would be
 17 affected?
 18 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Correct.
 19 MR VICTOR DAWES: I think you would also agree, if you look
 20 at the development of the fire and also the scale of the
 21 fire, everything was unprecedented; is that correct?
 22 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes.
 23 MR VICTOR DAWES: And also, when we read your evidence, upon
 24 receipt of the instruction from the director that you
 25 had to go to the scene to provide command and control;

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1 B10/5119. There were rather complete records about
 2 this. Page 5119. You can see that at 15:45 hours, so
 3 on the right-hand side we have "RES", responding to
 4 incident?
 5 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Correct.
 6 MR VICTOR DAWES: We know that subsequently you arrived at
 7 the scene very quickly, so at 16:10 you already arrived
 8 at Wang Fuk Court. So it was already No. 4 alarm.
 9 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes, correct.
 10 MR VICTOR DAWES: The deputy divisional officer at the time
 11 was Mr Wong King Man?
 12 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes.
 13 MR VICTOR DAWES: It recorded the time you arrived at the
 14 scene and also what you did upon arrival; this is
 15 paragraph 11. We can see here you mentioned that the
 16 fire spread to many neighbouring blocks. And then at
 17 16:10, line 4:
 18 "I promptly confirmed with Divisional Officer ...
 19 Lam Ho Chun that evacuation of occupants at all blocks
 20 was being effected ..."
 21 That's what you said in your witness statement.
 22 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes.
 23 MR VICTOR DAWES: Then you talk about the evacuation of all
 24 occupants. So is that your understanding, that is, you
 25 were the first one to make this decision, you were the

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1 decision-maker?
 2 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: No, incorrect. I discussed with
 3 Mr Lam Ho Chun, the divisional officer, and he told me
 4 that evacuation was underway.
 5 MR VICTOR DAWES: Okay. So that was what you tried to
 6 confirm with him?
 7 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Correct.
 8 MR VICTOR DAWES: So when did it start? When did the
 9 evacuation start? Can you tell us a bit more about
 10 that?
 11 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: According to the information I got
 12 from my colleagues, as soon as we arrived at the scene,
 13 we already started the evacuation. Most of the manpower
 14 resources were deployed to Wang Tai and Wang Cheong
 15 Houses. Then, at the time, actually we tried to go up
 16 the stairs to evacuate the residents because at the time
 17 a lot of the scaffolding was already falling and
 18 therefore we would have to create an exit passage for
 19 the residents because we ourselves couldn't enter the
 20 scene as well.
 21 MR VICTOR DAWES: So at 16:10 you already got the message
 22 that evacuation had already started, but then, because
 23 Wang Tai and Wang Cheong Houses were more seriously
 24 involved, the fire was very heavy, we can see the start
 25 time of the fire, so by 16:10 basically Wang Tai and

Page 33	<p>1 Wang Cheong Houses had three light wells on fire 2 already. 3 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes. 4 MR VICTOR DAWES: Then, according to what you said, you 5 would have to make a passageway for the residents from 6 the main entrance? 7 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes. We were trying to create 8 this passage for the residents. 9 MR VICTOR DAWES: And also from the evidence we could see 10 that as soon as you arrived at the scene you also found 11 out that -- you got the distress mayday message call 12 from Mr Ho Wai Ho. 13 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes. I'd also like to supplement. 14 Three colleagues were deployed to Wang Kin, Wang Sun and 15 also Wang Tao Houses. We tried to set the alarm off to 16 alert the residents, but then the fire alarm was not 17 working at those three blocks and therefore we tried to 18 suppress the fire. At around 3.30 we already saw that 19 some residents tried to run out on their own and then 20 police also arrived and, according to our usual practice 21 of collaboration, the police would also help us to 22 evacuate the residents in the neighbourhood and then we 23 would try to fight the fire so that residents would be 24 able to get the time to run out. 25 MR VICTOR DAWES: That's what happened before 16:10.</p>	Page 35	
Page 34	<p>1 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Right. 2 MR VICTOR DAWES: If we look at the photo, at that time, as 3 you said, the police had already arrived, evacuation was 4 underway, some people had escaped. Now, we know the 5 layout, so that is the rightmost two blocks. 6 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Right. 7 MR VICTOR DAWES: When you arrived -- you said that you sent 8 officers to sound the alarm. According to what you 9 said, that was done before you arrived or one of the 10 duties when you arrived? 11 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Before I arrived. 12 MR VICTOR DAWES: So you knew before you arrived that the 13 fire alarm system was not functioning? 14 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Right. 15 MR VICTOR DAWES: Shortly after you arrived, that is at 16 16:18, Mr Tang Wing Wah, NT North CFO, said that you 17 became the incident commander. 18 According to the guidelines, Mr Tang should be the 19 incident commander? 20 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Right. 21 MR VICTOR DAWES: You also said that at that time the 22 manpower mobilised had exceeded twice the predetermined 23 attendance. Who made the decision? 24 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: When I arrived I asked how much 25 resources was available, I asked colleagues at the</p>	<p>1 mobile command unit. 2 MR VICTOR DAWES: What I'd like to ask you is, when the fire 3 was upgraded to No. 5 alarm, you would be the incident 4 command according to the guideline? 5 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Right. 6 MR VICTOR DAWES: Paragraph 24 of your witness statement, 7 I'd like you to explain something to us. You said that 8 when you had arrived, and you talked about resources, 9 you talked about accumulated manpower deployed exceeded 10 6.5 of the PDA for a No. 5 alarm, which was considered 11 sufficient at the time. That means you had assessed the 12 available resources and deemed that it was enough to 13 tackle the situation. 14 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: In terms of manpower, yes; that is 15 in relation to firefighting frontline officers, the 16 number was sufficient. The reason why I upgraded the 17 alarm to No. 4 was that before it was upgraded, 18 I suggested to the then incident command that each block 19 should be the charge of a senior officer for 20 firefighting, plus one senior officer for rescue. When 21 everyone was in place, I thought it was the right time 22 to elevate the command structure. 23 Having considered the increasing number of calls for 24 assistance and the intensifying of the fire, in addition 25 to the time getting late and it getting dark with an</p>	Page 36
	<p>1 increased risk, it was the right time to elevate the 2 command structure. 3 MR VICTOR DAWES: In paragraph 12 of your witness statement 4 you set out what you did. It seems that there will be 5 two divisional officers or senior divisional officers as 6 sector officers. 7 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Right. 8 MR VICTOR DAWES: One in charge of firefighting, one in 9 charge of rescue? 10 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Right. 11 MR VICTOR DAWES: You call this a building-by-building 12 command strategy? 13 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Right. 14 MR VICTOR DAWES: From what you said, I gather that there 15 has never been a situation wherein a fire spread from 16 one building to another. So this approach is rare; 17 right? 18 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Unprecedented. This was the first 19 time, right. 20 MR VICTOR DAWES: You talk about upgrading the fire to 21 a No. 5 alarm and it was at 6.22. That's why you said 22 it was getting dark. The situation was suitable to make 23 a decision and the decision was made at 6.22. 24 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes. 25 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: Can I say, Mr Chan, that is</p>		

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<p>1 not an issue of resources. The upgrading of the alarm 2 was a change of the command structure at the right time, 3 that's a factor that you would give more weight to? 4 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Right. At that time, there was 5 six times the manpower of No. 5 alarm. So upgrading the 6 alarm will not increase manpower. However, with an 7 elevated command structure, the director's command post 8 sent a directorate officer, that is an assistant 9 divisional officer to be in charge of work, and also a 10 CFO was sent to handle calls for assistance. 11 MR VICTOR DAWES: Can I put it this way. There is a 12 question from the public that, given the intensity of 13 the fire, why was the alarm not elevated earlier, to 14 mobilise more people? It seems that this was 15 a misunderstanding because you have already devoted more 16 resources needed for a No. 4 alarm. So it's a decision 17 about command structure? 18 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: In relation to this fire, that's 19 right. 20 MR VICTOR DAWES: Upgrading from No. 4 to No. 5 alarm, apart 21 from the command structure, what other differences were 22 there or are there? 23 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: In relation to this fire, other 24 than the change in command structure, there wasn't many 25 differences.</p>	<p>1 MR VICTOR DAWES: So at the same time when firefighting 2 effort was made, there were also operations to go to 3 floors on fire to rescue people? 4 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Right. 5 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: We have read the report of 6 Garley Building. In general, is it the case that to 7 protect themselves, firemen have to follow certain 8 procedures, that is, to make sure that there is an 9 unobstructed passageway? Because when you've saved 10 someone, it's important to have clear passageway to take 11 them to a safe place. From what I've heard, is it the 12 case that some firefighters took a risk, that is, 13 without a safe access, they took the risk to go up to 14 rescue people? 15 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: That is right. Normally, on 16 a staircase, when there is fire, firefighters will turn 17 on the demand valve to use the air from the cylinder. 18 However, on this occasion there was heavy smoke and heat 19 in the stairs. If the gear was donned from the ground 20 floor, then they would not be able to go up to higher 21 floors. 22 I understand that some colleagues have taken a risk 23 to try to endure as long as possible before they turn on 24 the demand valve, to reach higher floors to carry out 25 rescue.</p>
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<p>1 MR VICTOR DAWES: Because there was already sufficient 2 manpower resources devoted. 3 We'll look at the operations record. At about 6.30, 4 that is 18:30, we learned about the firefighting efforts 5 of the seven blocks. Let's look at B10/5174, the lower 6 part. 7 Am I right to read it this way: when it comes to 8 rescue work of the many blocks, according to you, 9 you would talk about the firefighting efforts to which 10 floor. 11 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Right. 12 MR VICTOR DAWES: 6.30, for Wang Cheong, ground floor to 2nd 13 floor; Wang Tai, ground floor to 6th floor. On the next 14 page, at the top, you see a record of the relevant 15 floors. Am I right to read it this way? 16 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Right. 17 MR VICTOR DAWES: When firefighters went up to higher 18 floors, page 5201, at 19:40, record shows that for the 19 various blocks, firefighters have gone up to the 20 10th floor for rescue. I believe I'm right to interpret 21 it this way. 22 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes. If we look at the time, say 23 19:40, it doesn't mean that is the time when we have 24 reached that floor because the search and rescue team 25 might reach floors that were on fire to rescue people.</p>	<p>1 MR VICTOR DAWES: We see from records a snatch rescue, this 2 term. Is that what you just described or it means 3 something else? 4 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: It means something else. 5 Snatch rescue is applied in a safer situation when 6 rescue was done swiftly; demand valve was turned on in a 7 safe situation. However, in order to swiftly carry out 8 rescue mission, the checks were not done at meticulously 9 at the entry control point. 10 MR VICTOR DAWES: We see at page 5215, this page number, at 11 20:09:59 there is a series of record. At Wang Tai 12 House, 10th floor, there was firefighting efforts. All 13 the way down to 22-something on page 5228. We see that 14 there seems to be a record stating that there is an 15 attempt to establish a bridgehead on the 10th floor -- 16 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes. 17 MR VICTOR DAWES: -- as an access point, but it was 18 difficult and you did not succeed. Can you explain to 19 us about this mission? 20 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: To set a bridgehead on the 21 10th floor was to, as I said -- well, on the ground 22 floor, firefighters donned the BA equipment, but if it 23 was turned on then, then it would not last that long. 24 So if a bridgehead was established on the 10th floor, 25 then it could be used for firefighters to don the BA</p>

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<p>1 equipment there to go up to higher floors, but it was a 2 very strenuous situation, so firefighters had to 3 retreat. 4 MR VICTOR DAWES: Let's look at the general situation of the 5 eight blocks. Each block had their own command sector 6 officer. 7 You at that time thought that there were sufficient 8 resources to tackle the fire? 9 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Right. 10 MR VICTOR DAWES: There's something I'd like to ask about 11 a block that is left more or less untouched by the fire, 12 that is Wang Chi House. On that day, was there any 13 strategy in place to stop the fire from spreading to 14 Wang Chi House or were there other factors? 15 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Firefighters spray water at the 16 rooftop of Wang Chi House to the facade and the 17 scaffolding to stop the fire. Looking back, we thought 18 that the main factor was the wind direction. It was not 19 going towards Wang Chi House. That's why it was not 20 affected. 21 The fire spread towards the other direction. We 22 sprayed water on the facades of the other blocks but to 23 no avail. 24 MR VICTOR DAWES: You talked about on Wang Chi House 25 spraying water from the rooftop on the nets.</p>	<p>1 was not so badly affected as others even though there 2 was one light well on fire. The call was received at 3 16:18 but the man was rescued at 22:02. I'd like to ask 4 for your explanation about Wang Yan House because at 5 18:20 the lobby of Wang Yan House was not affected by 6 the fire, people could move freely in the lobby. Can 7 you explain to us what happened at that time? 8 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: The person in charge of the 9 command of the block made the decision. Yes, the ground 10 floor might not have been affected, but the situation in 11 the higher floors might be different depending on the 12 situation. 13 MR VICTOR DAWES: The matter of priority will be the sector 14 officer in charge of the block to decide? 15 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Right. Because the actual 16 situation of the block had to be taken into account 17 before decision was made. 18 MR VICTOR DAWES: I think your answer might be the same in 19 relation to Wang Kin House. Wang Kin House was lucky. 20 It was in the middle but it was not really affected. It 21 might have something to do with the wind direction. 22 There were calls for assistance needing 20 minutes or as 23 long as nine hours to be handled. It was the decision 24 of the sector officer in relation to priority; is that 25 right?</p>
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<p>1 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes. 2 MR VICTOR DAWES: That's from the rooftop. 3 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes. 4 MR VICTOR DAWES: You did not use other devices to spray 5 water on the scaffolding net; right? 6 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Right. 7 MR VICTOR DAWES: I think this is a matter of resources 8 deployment. We understand that when you were at the 9 scene, the FSD received calls for assistance from Wang 10 Chi House. From 4 pm to the morning of the next day 11 there were seven calls for assistance from Wang Chi 12 House. It took as short as 50 minutes to handle the 13 calls, but some were handled in nine hours, according to 14 the record. I think it's something to do with the 15 condition of the fire and resources. Can you explain 16 the situation to us? 17 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes. When we receive calls for 18 assistance at the support centre HQ, there was a 19 callback mechanism. We learned about the condition the 20 callers were in through the callback system. At that 21 time Wang Chi House was not affected by the fire so he 22 it was given a lower priority. 23 MR VICTOR DAWES: According to our record, at 16:18 there 24 was a call for assistance from unit 1704 from Wang Yan 25 House. Wang Yan House was next to Wang Chi House, it</p>	<p>1 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Right. It also depends on the 2 condition of the stairs, that is the intensity of the 3 smoke and also the intensity of the fire. 4 MR VICTOR DAWES: The biggest difficulty of the firefighting 5 effort was that, within a very short time, means of 6 escape was blocked by falling objects, say, for example, 7 scaffolding. As a result, it stopped firefighters from 8 entering. 9 At paragraph 19 you talked about the disaster 10 response and rescue team was mobilised to clear the 11 obstruction. However, the risk was high. It was not 12 done. Can you explain to us what were your 13 considerations? In general, how was the team deployed? 14 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: The disaster response and rescue 15 team is usually deployed to carry out overseas rescue 16 mission, say, for example, earthquake. At that time, 17 there was a large amount of scaffolding falling on to 18 the ground. The team was well equipped to remove 19 burning scaffoldings and heavy items. However, there 20 were burning scaffoldings and miscellaneous items 21 falling from height. The risk to clear the obstruction 22 was high. Having considered that, I did not ask to 23 deploy them. 24 MR VICTOR DAWES: You've also explained -- and there are 25 questions about this. There are some questions as to</p>

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<p>1 whether you should have upgraded the fire from No. 5 to 2 disaster alarm. Will you explain to us on this, please. 3 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: As I said in my statement, on the 4 scene we have enough manpower. Disaster alarm normally 5 refers to territory-wide multiple incidents that would 6 warrant a disaster alarm. For disaster alarm, it would 7 be a situation where we had exhausted all our resources, 8 and then we may need to have the assistance of the 9 garrison. In this particular fire we had a lot of 10 manpower, well close to 1,000 people at its highest, and 11 we still had spare resources, and we didn't have 12 a situation where multiple places are affected in 13 Hong Kong. 14 MR VICTOR DAWES: You also said that you realised that the 15 fire couldn't be put out in a short time, it would be 16 a long battle. And you also had measures like the 17 portable pump and also drones that were deployed for 18 aerial surveillance and you deployed coaches to convey 19 the firefighters. 20 After you'd taken over, because of the scale of the 21 fire, you faced a lot of difficulties and therefore you 22 considered other measures. 23 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes. 24 MR VICTOR DAWES: Is there anything else you'd like to tell 25 the public?</p>	<p>1 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: "Fire surrounded" means that our 2 judgment on the scene is that the fire will not spread 3 to other places. In this situation, our judgment was 4 the fire wouldn't be spreading to other affected areas, 5 so that's why we issued this message. And for the DCP, 6 to understand the situation on the scene, fire 7 control -- the units on fire are effectively controlled, 8 so we would issue the message of fire under control. 9 18:10 hours, "stop" means that all the available 10 resources are enough to handle the situation and there 11 is no need to deploy additional manpower. 12 MR VICTOR DAWES: After the stop deployment there were still 13 635 firefighters on the scene. Can you elaborate 14 further on the work? 15 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: We were dealing with a couple of 16 things. For the affected units, we still had to spray 17 water on them to prevent reignition. There were still 18 officers on the scene and we had to keep an eye on the 19 conveyance of the deceased. Firefighters would also be 20 going upstairs to conduct thorough searches to make sure 21 that we could locate all the deceased ones. 22 MR VICTOR DAWES: In your statement you said that a lot of 23 resources were deployed. Let's have a look. In the 24 entire operation, 391 fire engines were deployed, 25 185 ambulances, 2,310 firefighters. This is the largest</p>
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<p>1 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Normally a fire wouldn't last for 2 such a long time. The SDO normally do not need 3 rotation. Because of the length of the fire, we've 4 asked the command post to arrange for SDOs to take over. 5 There are so many ranks of officers, some of them are 6 not operational, some of them are fire prevention unit 7 and they've been called upon to give assistance. 8 For shift change, the officers from other stations 9 would be coming to take over. We changed shift at 9 and 10 we wanted to keep the resources there on the scene and 11 we had arranged for coaches to convey the officers who 12 were supposed to start at 9 to the scene. 13 We informed them that they had to be on duty one and 14 a half hours earlier, ahead of time, and this is an 15 unusual arrangement. 16 MR VICTOR DAWES: You worked overnight. You were there 17 until 09:35 on the 27th and then you handed over to 18 another DD, Mr Wong Ka Wing, and at 9 pm you took over 19 as the commander again. 20 To complete the record, let me put this to you. On 21 the 27th, you declared that the fire was surrounded and 22 on the 28th, 03:15, it was under control. 10:18, 28th, 23 you issued the stop message. To let people know these 24 terminology, how did you decide "surrounded" or "under 25 control"?</p>	<p>1 scale deployment ever. 2 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes, correct. 3 MR VICTOR DAWES: There are 12 firefighters who sustained 4 injury. One lost his life. The operation, more than 5 40 hours, this is the longest, isn't it? 6 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: In some cases it would be longer. 7 In 2016, the mini-storage fire. 8 MR VICTOR DAWES: It was longer. 9 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes. 10 MR VICTOR DAWES: We're going to be turning to other 11 subjects relating to what happened on this scene. 12 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: Let's take a break for 13 15 minutes. 14 (11.28 am) 15 (A short adjournment) 16 (11.43 am) 17 MR VICTOR DAWES: Mr Chan, next I'd like you to explain to 18 us a question that has been asked by many. It's about 19 the evacuation. Because looking at what we saw, okay, 20 so we already went through the time when all the eight 21 blocks' light wells were on fire. 22 Previously, we also discussed with your colleagues, 23 that is generally speaking the advice given to the 24 residents is that as soon as you hear the fire alarm, 25 then FSD colleagues, upon receipt of their assistance</p>

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1 calls, they would have to open the door to see if
 2 there's smoke, and then if there's no smoke, then you
 3 would have to go to the nearest stairs to go down. If
 4 there is smoke, then you will have to retreat back to
 5 your flat. So that's the normal practice.
 6 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Correct.
 7 MR VICTOR DAWES: This is a special case. As you said, this
 8 is an unprecedented situation with multiple blocks.
 9 At a very early stage, because it's under
 10 renovation, the fire spread very rapidly from one block
 11 to another. Another difficulty is, as you mentioned,
 12 the fire alarm was not working.
 13 So would it be correct if I put it this way, that is
 14 after understanding the situation at the scene, the
 15 biggest difficulty in terms of evacuation is that for
 16 the normal way to inform the residents that there's a
 17 fire, that device is not working, and therefore there is
 18 difficulty in terms of alerting the residents about the
 19 fire?
 20 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes, that's correct.
 21 MR VICTOR DAWES: Given the resources available at the time,
 22 apparently there was no other device that would have
 23 worked like a fire alarm to effectively alert the
 24 residents in the units that there is a fire and you need
 25 to escape as soon as possible.

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1 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes, correct.
 2 MR VICTOR DAWES: Given this example, we can see that the
 3 developments were so rapid that it's happening within
 4 a very short space of time, and therefore some of these
 5 circumstances would not have been predicted.
 6 But then, when we looked at the evidence, it showed
 7 that Mr Hui Kin On, the senior station officer, he said
 8 that he arrived at the scene at 14:50 and then starting
 9 from 15:00 he saw that the fire already spread to
 10 Wang Tai House and of course it showed here that the
 11 light well was on fire. But then there might have been
 12 other objects that had spread to that block, and then,
 13 for Wang Tai House, the main entrance started at 15:20,
 14 that it collapsed, and as a result people could not
 15 escape from that entrance.
 16 If you had seen the fire spreading to Wang Tai House
 17 at that time and there was 20 minutes' time for people
 18 to escape, would it have been possible to evacuate the
 19 residents of Wang Tai House earlier? Can you explain to
 20 us here?
 21 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes. Because, as we have seen,
 22 you just said that there was 20 minutes' gap before the
 23 main entrance was closed or blocked. But then, in fact,
 24 we could see that scaffolds were falling down and there
 25 were bamboo sticks falling down when they were burnt.

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1 And then to ensure that residents would have
 2 a passageway to escape, we would have to ensure that at
 3 the entrance we would have to have this passage created.
 4 Because we could see that residents were coming down one
 5 after another. If there's no passage, then actually,
 6 even for the ones who escaped earlier, they would not
 7 have been able to come out.
 8 MR VICTOR DAWES: Okay. There might have been mistake in
 9 the records because the senior station officer actually
 10 arrived at the scene at 14:56, not 14:50. So within a
 11 few minutes he could see that the fire had already
 12 spread.
 13 So, just now, as you explained, the main entrance
 14 only collapsed at 15:20. But then, earlier on, some
 15 dangerous objects were already falling down and you said
 16 that that also caused some difficulty in terms of
 17 evacuation.
 18 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Correct.
 19 MR VICTOR DAWES: At the time, at 15:20, am I right to say
 20 that -- consolidating the evidence at 15:20, you already
 21 activated the tier 2 response, you already set up this
 22 director command room, and then you knew already it is
 23 not an ordinary fire; this is a major blaze?
 24 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes.
 25 MR VICTOR DAWES: And the residents understood that Wang

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1 Cheong and Wang Tai Houses actually caught fire at a
 2 very early stage. For the rest of the blocks, in fact,
 3 there should have been more time for you to evacuate the
 4 residents there. We also saw that the residents injured
 5 and also casualties were a lot lower in the other
 6 blocks. But for the five blocks that were affected at a
 7 later stage, one hour after the break-out of the fire or
 8 even after three hours, actually within those five
 9 blocks there were also casualties. So this fire also
 10 caused casualties.
 11 At Wang Yan, there was one injured; and then Wang
 12 Tao, two deceased; and Wang Sun, two deceased; and also
 13 Wang Shing, also one, a 77-year-old. So was there time
 14 for you to evacuate those residents to ensure there
 15 would not have been casualties in those blocks? Can you
 16 explain to us what you saw at the scene?
 17 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes. In fact, at the time there
 18 were two options available to us. Given the manpower at
 19 the scene and also the scale of the fire, there were two
 20 options available to us. One, concentrating the
 21 resources to suppress the fire; at Wang Cheong, Wang Tai
 22 House, we can spray water at these two blocks. As I
 23 said, police already arrived at the scene at 3.30. And
 24 then, according to our tacit arrangement, they would try
 25 to help the residents to evacuate. That's the first

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<p>1 option.</p> <p>2 The second option would be to deploy some manpower</p> <p>3 to Wang Kin, Wang Sun, Wang Tao, Wang Yan or even Wang</p> <p>4 Shing Houses, to evacuate the residents there. But</p> <p>5 then, in doing so, the fire might have spread more</p> <p>6 rapidly and the blaze could become more serious and it</p> <p>7 could also affect the other blocks more quickly.</p> <p>8 Therefore, as I said, the first option was to suppress</p> <p>9 the fire in order to buy time for the residents to</p> <p>10 escape.</p> <p>11 If you look at what you just said, if you look at</p> <p>12 the number of casualties, my review afterwards was that</p> <p>13 that's also an option that I could have taken.</p> <p>14 MR VICTOR DAWES: According to what you just said, we might</p> <p>15 have another question, that is you said that you</p> <p>16 concentrated the resources and manpower to fight the</p> <p>17 fire in the two blocks that were most seriously</p> <p>18 affected, so is it a question of resources and manpower?</p> <p>19 Because what we see is, given the situation, in fact, we</p> <p>20 could see that before 4 pm, and of course the first two</p> <p>21 blocks were already burning very seriously. And then</p> <p>22 for the other blocks, actually, there was quite a long</p> <p>23 gap time, they had not been affected yet. And then,</p> <p>24 according to your explanation just now, you made a</p> <p>25 decision.</p>	<p>1 the timeline, from 3.30 to 4.30, this was an hour's gap,</p> <p>2 so why had you not been able to evacuate all the</p> <p>3 residents from Wang Sun, Wang Tao, blocks B and C?</p> <p>4 Everybody would have this question, so can you assist us</p> <p>5 here.</p> <p>6 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: With regard to the police</p> <p>7 department, I don't know that very well, but if you --</p> <p>8 we put ourselves in those shoes, then it would take time</p> <p>9 for them to deploy sufficient manpower to do it.</p> <p>10 MR VICTOR DAWES: But then would it be unfair to say this,</p> <p>11 that is, in other words, the fact that you had not been</p> <p>12 able to evacuate residents of the other blocks earlier</p> <p>13 to reduce the casualties, that might have been because</p> <p>14 of the limitation of resources and manpower at the</p> <p>15 scene? This is not a criticism. But then -- to go to</p> <p>16 the extreme, that's the issue; is that right?</p> <p>17 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: As I just said, for the manpower</p> <p>18 that was deployed, they would not be able to appear</p> <p>19 right away at the scene and therefore, given the</p> <p>20 manpower at the scene at the time, we made a choice,</p> <p>21 that is, we tried to suppress the fire because we had no</p> <p>22 idea as to what would happen if we picked another</p> <p>23 choice, because if we deployed manpower to do the</p> <p>24 evacuation without suppressing the fire, then it is</p> <p>25 possible that the remaining blocks' residents might not</p>
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<p>1 Looking back at the resources and manpower back</p> <p>2 then, your position was that -- and you have thought</p> <p>3 that is a right decision, but then that would also give</p> <p>4 rise to another issue. That is -- if that is the case,</p> <p>5 should you have deployed more resources and manpower to</p> <p>6 evacuate the residents in the other blocks? Because, as</p> <p>7 you said in the morning, indeed, you had enough</p> <p>8 resources and manpower; is that right?</p> <p>9 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Well, I'd also like to say this to</p> <p>10 you. At the time we already had 260-plus frontline</p> <p>11 firefighters who had been deployed to the scene.</p> <p>12 You would also have to understand that for firefighters</p> <p>13 deployed to the scene, they would not be able to appear</p> <p>14 right away. In fact, there were about 100 firefighters</p> <p>15 at the scene already, and to suppress the fire, to</p> <p>16 prevent the fire from spreading, it's a major blaze,</p> <p>17 we would also have to make a choice between different</p> <p>18 options.</p> <p>19 MR VICTOR DAWES: As you just said, evacuation might be</p> <p>20 something that the police could help. We would also</p> <p>21 have this question, that is in terms of manpower you</p> <p>22 would have to make a choice and then for evacuation,</p> <p>23 that might not have to be done by the firefighters and</p> <p>24 therefore would you have the capacity to evacuate the</p> <p>25 residents from the other blocks? Because if you look at</p>	<p>1 have been able to escape because the fire would have</p> <p>2 spread. Because just imagine the situation with</p> <p>3 Wang Cheong and Wang Tai, the scaffolding was on fire,</p> <p>4 and the entrance and the exit were blocked and more</p> <p>5 residents might not have been able to escape. Even for</p> <p>6 us to evacuate the residents upstairs, there would also</p> <p>7 have been difficulties.</p> <p>8 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: Well, for Firefighter</p> <p>9 Ho Wai Ho, by the time he reached the upper floors the</p> <p>10 situation was already very bad.</p> <p>11 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Exactly.</p> <p>12 MR VICTOR DAWES: A connected question that people have</p> <p>13 asked and that's about the escalation of the alarm and</p> <p>14 also at what time when the alarm was escalated. You</p> <p>15 might have learned about this earlier. Some colleagues</p> <p>16 have also said about this. Some colleagues said that</p> <p>17 the escalation of fire would have to be done gradually,</p> <p>18 step by step, because it's about logistics, it's also</p> <p>19 about the workflow. I believe that that is the correct</p> <p>20 way to put it. So there is no question of escalating</p> <p>21 this from No. 2 to No. 4; is that right?</p> <p>22 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Well, first, setting aside No. 2</p> <p>23 alarm, because No. 2 alarm, this is just an initial</p> <p>24 attendance. Compared to No. 1 alarm, that's the general</p> <p>25 or ordinary fire, and then No. 2 alarm means that, for</p>

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<p>1 example, if it happens at the MTR station or at a 2 hospital, then there would be special deployment. No. 1 3 alarm would have been escalated to No. 3 right away. 4 But then we never said that that could not be 5 escalated from No. 1 to No. 4 right away because if the 6 resources for No. 1 were not sufficient then we would 7 escalate it to No. 3, and if No. 3 was not adequate, 8 we would have to escalate it to No. 4. And after the 9 escalation, then there would also be pre-determined 10 deployment or pre-determined attendance that would be 11 deployed to the scene, and therefore we don't have to 12 count or call upon individual appliance to go to the 13 scene. 14 MR VICTOR DAWES: We understand that from the initial 15 arrival of colleagues at the scene, they found out the 16 situation and then, as some of your colleagues said, 17 where there was a major renovation, you could see that 18 all the eight blocks were surrounded by scaffolding. In 19 terms of the danger at the scene and also the risk 20 entailed would be very high. I believe you would agree 21 to that; right? 22 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes, I agree. 23 MR VICTOR DAWES: And even though we haven't heard from the 24 experts' evidence, but I'm sure you can also assist us, 25 that is right now, for the fire prevention design of</p>	<p>1 provided that video clip to us. 2 So initially, when we saw that, we were all shocked 3 because the fire was burning very rapidly and spread 4 very fast and then, within a matter of one or two 5 minutes, the fire was already very serious. 6 So we all have this question, that is, when we saw 7 the situation, and on top of that you also said that 8 there was also this resource consideration. So should 9 you have done this as soon as you saw this, that you 10 should have the calculated it to a higher alarm? Why is 11 that the case? Because, as you said, between 3.30 and 12 4.30, if we had had more resources at the scene, that 13 might have assisted in terms of evacuation. So with 14 regard to this saying, what is your take on this, what's 15 your response to this? 16 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: First, we are looking at it with 17 hindsight. But if it was seen at that time, like 14:59, 18 it would be appropriate to upgrade it to No. 3 fire 19 alarm. We did not expect the fire to develop in this 20 way. As you said, it was unprecedented. We've never 21 seen a fire spreading horizontally so quickly. The 22 alarm was upgraded to No. 3 and there was wind blowing 23 miscellaneous items and burning debris to the next 24 block, hence we upgraded the number of fire alarm. 25 MR VICTOR DAWES: But it was quite some time afterwards when</p>
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<p>1 buildings, very often that would target interior fire, 2 for example, the kitchen might be on fire, some people 3 might be smoking in the units and caused a fire, and 4 your practice or the design is that there is some saying 5 that there would be compartmentalisation of fire so you 6 would try to insulate the fire from the adjoining areas. 7 In this case, apparently that does not apply because 8 you can see that the fire started from outside of the 9 building, so it's the fire intruding into the buildings. 10 Am I right in saying that? 11 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes, correct. 12 MR VICTOR DAWES: And as you just said, on the external wall 13 of the building, our challenge is that apparently there 14 were a lot of burning objects. 15 In fact, at 14:57, we said that senior station 16 officer arrived at the scene and then by the time when 17 he arrived, what he saw was that the fire was already of 18 a scale of 8 metres times 30 metres. So the scale of 19 the fire was already quite large. 20 I can see you nodding, so I think that's correct; 21 right? 22 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes. 23 MR VICTOR DAWES: You can also look at the same page. What 24 we see here, the picture at 14:55 might not be that 25 clear. By 14:58, we saw a clip. Actually, the FSD also</p>	<p>1 it was upgraded to No. 4 alarm. Of course with 2 hindsight we might have asked a bit too much, but now, 3 do you think that it would be a better time to escalate 4 it to a No. 4 alarm earlier? 5 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes, looking with hindsight, 6 it would help if it had been upgraded to No. 4 alarm 7 earlier. 8 MR VICTOR DAWES: Would you take that into consideration in 9 your future review of guidelines? 10 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes. 11 MR VICTOR DAWES: Just now you also mentioned the No. 1 and 12 No. 2 fire alarms, you call them initial response. But 13 in some circumstances it would be a No. 2 alarm. Under 14 your guideline there are different types, fire at hotels 15 and hospitals; a second type involves dangerous goods; 16 and the third type talks about restricted water supply. 17 I think that's the right way to put it; right? 18 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Right. 19 MR VICTOR DAWES: In relation to blocks undergoing major 20 renovation, using Wang Fuk Court as an example, the 21 number of residents will not be fewer than that in 22 hotels. We see the blocks were wrapped in nets and, in 23 addition, there was an inoperational fire alarm system. 24 So is it possible to consider sites like this to start 25 with a No. 4 fire alarm?</p>

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<p>1 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Major renovation is temporary, not 2 permanent. In relation to buildings undergoing major 3 renovation, we will not treat it as a No. 2 fire alarm 4 mobilisation at the start. However, we have put in 5 place a contingency plan to add more appliances. This 6 serves the same purpose but it is a temporary 7 arrangement, not a permanent one, that is in the form of 8 a contingency plan.</p> <p>9 MR VICTOR DAWES: What we should consider is that of course 10 different sites may need different plans, but we can see 11 very obviously that the risk of blocks undergoing major 12 renovation is much higher than other blocks. Will you 13 consider starting with a No. 2 fire alarm for sites 14 undergoing major renovation?</p> <p>15 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Contingency plan gives us more 16 flexibility because the local fire station can make 17 assessments as to how many appliances should be added 18 when they consider the sites under major renovation. 19 There is more flexibility and it's more suitable than 20 rigidly setting it as a No. 2 fire to start.</p> <p>21 MR VICTOR DAWES: We talk about when evacuation should be 22 done and when residents should be informed. The 23 difficulty of this incident is that in addition to the 24 inoperative fire alarm system is also the fact that 25 there were access openings created, resulting in fire</p>	<p>1 not use the Government's EAS, emergency alarm system. 2 Paragraph 28 of your witness statement, you said that at 3 that time it was considered. However, in the end, you 4 did not decide to use it.</p> <p>5 Let's go to WS8/1933.</p> <p>6 You said that it was time-critical messages via 7 mobile networks. We recall -- I believe that during 8 COVID many of us received the message. Perhaps like me, 9 you were scared because it was quite loud when message 10 was received. I remember that it was something to do 11 with a hospital.</p> <p>12 Here you said that the consideration at that time 13 was that the -- it would be under territory-wide 14 emergency, say, for example, massive infrastructure 15 failing, large riots, bomb disposal, rather than 16 localised incidents. So it's not something that is 17 localised.</p> <p>18 I'm not going to ask you about the rationale of the 19 policy because it seems to be quite conflicting.</p> <p>20 Bomb disposal is localised unless there are many 21 bombs all over the territory. You understand that; 22 right?</p> <p>23 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes.</p> <p>24 MR VICTOR DAWES: You said that you consider it was 25 unsuitable to trigger this system because you deemed</p>
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<p>1 going into the staircases rapidly. This in turn 2 increase the difficulty of your firefighters in their 3 operation.</p> <p>4 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Right.</p> <p>5 MR VICTOR DAWES: In addition to malfunctioning fire alarm 6 system and smoke getting through via the access 7 openings, there was also some other problem, say, for 8 example, the fact that no one could activate the fire 9 alarm system.</p> <p>10 Someone talked about sirens in your fire engines. 11 However, someone said that they did not keep the siren 12 on because they did not want that to affect 13 communications, you agree with that saying; right?</p> <p>14 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Right.</p> <p>15 MR VICTOR DAWES: Did you consider whether there were any 16 other ways to alert residents?</p> <p>17 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: At that time, the resources were 18 focused to create access for residents. Regarding 19 notification to residents, as I said, our colleagues 20 went to three blocks to try to activate the fire alarm 21 but to no avail. We had to make a choice. If we used 22 other ways, then it would mean a change in deployment of 23 resources.</p> <p>24 MR VICTOR DAWES: Right. Many people have asked and you've 25 also touched on this in your witness statement, you did</p>	<p>1 that localised on one communication with specific 2 residents would be better, that is, instead of a 3 broadcast to the general public.</p> <p>4 Another concern was the development of the fire. 5 You considered these factors at that time.</p> <p>6 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Let me add. When we hear a fire 7 alarm, through the drills we've received or the message 8 from the FSD, when we hear a fire alarm we should try to 9 escape. When there is smoke, say, in the staircase, 10 then we go back to our unit, awaiting rescue. However, 11 when it comes to the emergency alert system, there has 12 not been similar educational efforts put in place in 13 relation to the system. So residents may wonder whether 14 they should escape. And if they had done, they would be 15 put in greater danger. And it takes around an hour to 16 issue the alert. It wouldn't help much, given the 17 situation.</p> <p>18 MR VICTOR DAWES: Some follow-up questions. First, there is 19 not really any education campaign to teach the 20 residents. However, with a system, people will receive 21 a message via their mobile phones, so the directions 22 will be more effectively given to residents. I'm sure 23 you understand the logic of my question.</p> <p>24 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: However, we have not made any 25 preparation as to what we should put in the messages</p>

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<p>1 under the system.</p> <p>2 MR VICTOR DAWES: The second consideration is the one hour,</p> <p>3 that is it would take an hour to go through the</p> <p>4 procedure. It's not the fact that you need one hour to</p> <p>5 technically trigger the system.</p> <p>6 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: I don't really know why it takes</p> <p>7 one hour. We use the callback mechanism to communicate</p> <p>8 with residents.</p> <p>9 MR VICTOR DAWES: When it comes to the callback mechanism,</p> <p>10 many of us would think that the major issue was the</p> <p>11 inoperational fire alarm system. So the only means to</p> <p>12 alert residents is absent, given also the fact that</p> <p>13 windows were all boarded up. So this would be the only</p> <p>14 option left. Can I reasonably put it this way?</p> <p>15 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Right.</p> <p>16 MR VICTOR DAWES: So it doesn't conflict with the use of the</p> <p>17 callback mechanism because you can still use the</p> <p>18 callback mechanism. Am I right to put it this way?</p> <p>19 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Right.</p> <p>20 MR VICTOR DAWES: We need to be fair to you. Sometimes when</p> <p>21 we criticise the Government for not following</p> <p>22 procedures, we admonish them. But when they follow</p> <p>23 procedures, we also criticise them. But this is an</p> <p>24 unprecedented incident. And there is one obvious work</p> <p>25 that needs to be done, that is, to alert residents</p>	<p>1 we would not have spent much resources to educate the</p> <p>2 public.</p> <p>3 MR VICTOR DAWES: Afterwards, the Government consider</p> <p>4 improving the EAS for the use of various government</p> <p>5 departments. Information from the public domain said</p> <p>6 that the system can be configured to be issued to a</p> <p>7 localised area.</p> <p>8 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Right.</p> <p>9 MR VICTOR DAWES: And I believe in the future there will be</p> <p>10 public education to teach the general public about it?</p> <p>11 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Right.</p> <p>12 MR VICTOR DAWES: But there is a query. The system may not</p> <p>13 apply just to a fire but to different disasters. So the</p> <p>14 system is not just to inform the public about something,</p> <p>15 it's about what happened and what to do.</p> <p>16 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: In the future, if the system is</p> <p>17 used, we will need to first look at the messages to be</p> <p>18 sent and put in place relevant public education.</p> <p>19 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: I think one of the things we</p> <p>20 learned from this incident is that many things happened</p> <p>21 out of our expectations and it's not possible to make</p> <p>22 advance preparations for the fire because, if we knew</p> <p>23 about the fire, then things would have turned out</p> <p>24 differently.</p> <p>25 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Right.</p>
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<p>1 therein that there was a fire. Looking back, it may</p> <p>2 not -- do you think it's not a wise decision to not use</p> <p>3 an available system?</p> <p>4 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: It's not just about that. As I</p> <p>5 said, we would not know how the residents would react</p> <p>6 having received the alert. We all know about the</p> <p>7 conditions of the blocks. If residents tried to escape,</p> <p>8 they might be put into greater danger. We would not be</p> <p>9 able to predict how the residents would react.</p> <p>10 MR VICTOR DAWES: I may not fully understand your stance, so</p> <p>11 let me ask further questions.</p> <p>12 The most important thing at that time was to alert</p> <p>13 the residents of Wang Fuk Court about the fire. You</p> <p>14 agree that with a functioning alarm system they would</p> <p>15 know, but everyone would react in a different way?</p> <p>16 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: With a functioning fire alarm</p> <p>17 system, I'm confident that the residents would know what</p> <p>18 to do.</p> <p>19 MR VICTOR DAWES: And you said that there'd be a drill to</p> <p>20 try to escape, and if that would be dangerous</p> <p>21 they should stay inside the flat. That is a simple</p> <p>22 message sent to them.</p> <p>23 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes, it's a simple message, but in</p> <p>24 an emergency, would everyone be able to do what they're</p> <p>25 supposed to do? That is not certain. Otherwise,</p>	<p>1 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: I believe that frontline</p> <p>2 firefighters did their best.</p> <p>3 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Right.</p> <p>4 MR VICTOR DAWES: I fully understand the difficulties at</p> <p>5 that time. But from what we've heard from you, it was</p> <p>6 a conscious decision not to use it, it's not that the</p> <p>7 system had been forgotten.</p> <p>8 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: That's right.</p> <p>9 MR VICTOR DAWES: The next topic we'd like to touch on is</p> <p>10 the FSI, fire services installations. Mr Tung, your</p> <p>11 colleague, gave evidence and you were here as well;</p> <p>12 right?</p> <p>13 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Right.</p> <p>14 MR VICTOR DAWES: We talked about the difficulties</p> <p>15 encountered by Mr Ho Wai Ho. I'd like to talk to you</p> <p>16 about policy decisions. We played the CCTV footage in</p> <p>17 the hearing. Mr Ho stopped to help an elderly lady in</p> <p>18 a wheelchair. That's why he lost sight of his colleague</p> <p>19 and went to Wang Tai House on his own. That is clear.</p> <p>20 From CCTV we also saw that at 15:16, that is one minute</p> <p>21 after Mr Ho Wai Ho went into Wang Tai House, some other</p> <p>22 colleagues ran in and very quickly ran out. I'm sure</p> <p>23 you knew what happened at that time.</p> <p>24 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes.</p> <p>25 MR VICTOR DAWES: Let's look at the clip C6, tab 1. It's at</p>

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<p>1 15:16:30.</p> <p>2 (Video played)</p> <p>3 MR VICTOR DAWES: We can also see the intensity of the fire</p> <p>4 from the reflection on the gate. We have to be fair.</p> <p>5 As you said, a fire involving multiple blocks is</p> <p>6 something that you've never handled before. It seems</p> <p>7 that on that day your colleagues had difficulties</p> <p>8 identifying individual blocks.</p> <p>9 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: At No. 3 alarm, not just the</p> <p>10 colleagues from Tai Po Fire Station were there. There</p> <p>11 were also colleagues from other fire stations. They may</p> <p>12 not know which block was which.</p> <p>13 MR VICTOR DAWES: But your practice is firemen would not go</p> <p>14 into the fire scene on their own, they would go in</p> <p>15 groups?</p> <p>16 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes.</p> <p>17 MR VICTOR DAWES: Let's have a look at this. You didn't</p> <p>18 realise Mr Ho went into Wang Tai House. He went into</p> <p>19 the wrong block.</p> <p>20 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: He received instruction to go into</p> <p>21 the 27th floor of Wang Cheong House.</p> <p>22 MR VICTOR DAWES: By way of background, the situation was</p> <p>23 chaotic. His colleagues went to Wang Cheong House and</p> <p>24 they saw some colleagues were coming in. They thought</p> <p>25 that it was Mr Ho so they didn't know Mr Ho got</p>	<p>1 Then I asked Mr Ho's team why he went on his own,</p> <p>2 and they couldn't say anything, because there was</p> <p>3 a misunderstanding probably. My concern was Mr Ho might</p> <p>4 be teaming up with other colleagues and the mayday may</p> <p>5 have come from other colleagues, or even if it is from</p> <p>6 Mr Ho, would the other colleagues be in danger as well?</p> <p>7 So I asked them to do the headcount, to do the roll call</p> <p>8 to ascertain that it was only Mr Ho that went missing</p> <p>9 and the signal came from him. And there was a</p> <p>10 probationary station officer who said that it was from</p> <p>11 Mr Ho.</p> <p>12 MR VICTOR DAWES: That has given rise to the other issue</p> <p>13 that we looked at, and that is the entry control point.</p> <p>14 Under these circumstances, the procedures could not have</p> <p>15 prevented what happened to Mr Ho. Can you elaborate on</p> <p>16 this, please?</p> <p>17 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: In a typical situation -- from the</p> <p>18 CCTV footage, Mr Ho was assisting the residents and he</p> <p>19 got separated from his team and he mistook Wang Tai</p> <p>20 House for Wang Cheong House. So he went up Wang Tai</p> <p>21 House. In normal procedures, we would get out of the</p> <p>22 lift two floors below because we want to have</p> <p>23 a bridgehead. So two floors below wouldn't be affected</p> <p>24 by the smoke; it would be an appropriate location.</p> <p>25 Mr Ho got out of the lift on the 25th floor. In normal</p>
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<p>1 separated.</p> <p>2 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes, correct.</p> <p>3 MR VICTOR DAWES: So they carried on with their task.</p> <p>4 Having learned this lesson, there might be a</p> <p>5 possibility of colleagues going somewhere else to carry</p> <p>6 out the task. What lesson have you drawn and what</p> <p>7 strategies do you have to prevent the repeat of this?</p> <p>8 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: To prevent a repeat of this,</p> <p>9 we would have the colleagues from the same team,</p> <p>10 they should be collaborating with one another.</p> <p>11 MR VICTOR DAWES: Paragraph 11 of your statement, you said</p> <p>12 there was a mayday signal and that is a really</p> <p>13 significant matter.</p> <p>14 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes.</p> <p>15 MR VICTOR DAWES: So you tried to understand the situation</p> <p>16 from your colleagues?</p> <p>17 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Correct.</p> <p>18 MR VICTOR DAWES: Will you tell us at that time what report</p> <p>19 did you receive?</p> <p>20 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: When I arrived on the scene senior</p> <p>21 fireman Mr Ho had been sent to the hospital. I asked</p> <p>22 the colleague Mr Hui, he said he received "mayday,</p> <p>23 mayday on the 31st floor". And I asked who issued the</p> <p>24 mayday, can we be sure that it was Mr Ho, and</p> <p>25 we couldn't confirm that it was from Mr Ho.</p>	<p>1 situation, if there is an entry control point, it would</p> <p>2 be different situation.</p> <p>3 MR VICTOR DAWES: So the entry control point should be set</p> <p>4 up on the 25th floor?</p> <p>5 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes, in a normal kind of fire</p> <p>6 situation that's an appropriate location. But that's</p> <p>7 the guideline. This is not really a rigid arrangement.</p> <p>8 MR VICTOR DAWES: Yes. In the fire scene things are</p> <p>9 changing all the time. In this situation, where was the</p> <p>10 entry control point?</p> <p>11 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: It wasn't set up yet. Because the</p> <p>12 place they needed to go to was Wang Cheong House. He</p> <p>13 was from Shatin LRU, he couldn't enter Wang Cheong</p> <p>14 House, so they had to create an access on Wang Cheong</p> <p>15 House.</p> <p>16 MR VICTOR DAWES: Things were happening so fast that the</p> <p>17 entry control procedures were not set up and the</p> <p>18 colleagues already went in?</p> <p>19 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Correct.</p> <p>20 MR VICTOR DAWES: In the future training, this is something</p> <p>21 that should be of concern to you.</p> <p>22 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Right.</p> <p>23 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: A fire normally would happen</p> <p>24 to one unit, and two floors below the unit you create an</p> <p>25 entry control point; that's a typical situation?</p>

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<p>1 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes, it is quite common. 2 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: Why doesn't an entry control 3 point have to be on the ground floor? 4 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Not on the ground floor because, 5 if you follow the procedures, once we pass through the 6 entry control point we need to have the BA. So if you 7 put the entry control point on the ground floor, you 8 will be wasting the air content, so we will be creating 9 the point at a level that is not affected by the smoke. 10 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: So Mr Ho was doing something 11 that was quite typical, a normal execution of his duty? 12 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Right. 13 MR VICTOR DAWES: So can I put it this way. Like you said, 14 Mr Ho would think that there would be an entry control 15 point on the 25th floor if he had to go to the 27th? 16 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes, I would think likewise if I 17 were in the same situation. 18 MR VICTOR DAWES: So he went up there, he realised that 19 there was no entry control point. 20 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Nor did he see any other 21 colleagues. 22 MR VICTOR DAWES: So it is for this reason that the FLS and 23 also the alphaSCOUT were not activated because there is 24 no entry control point? 25 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Right.</p>	<p>1 House. 2 There are other statements as well. I'm not sure 3 whether you can assist here. 4 There is a Mr Wong Tak Fai, probational station 5 officer. C6/2441. Second paragraph, further down. 6 Have you seen that statement? 7 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: No. 8 MR VICTOR DAWES: Let me take you through this 9 paragraph (2). He's in charge of the rescue team. He's 10 from the Tai Po East hydraulic platform. 11 Paragraph (4), this is what he said: 12 "Tai Po East hydraulic platform arrived. Parked at 13 the Baptist Public School. The scaffolding outside Wang 14 Cheong caught fire. A lot of smoke. No fire alarm. We 15 received from FSCC a lot of calls for assistance." 16 He recorded that and he put on the gear and he asked 17 the senior fireman Fung Cheuk Wah and fireman Li Chun 18 Kit to go to the rooftop of Wang Cheong House to handle 19 the call for assistance in units 2701 and 2703 and also 20 sent others as well. 21 We are concerned about 2701 and 2703. Let's turn to 22 bundle C6, page 2446. That's the location of the parked 23 engines. Number 1, Tai Po East hydraulic platform. I'm 24 sure we're all familiar with the access points of Wang 25 Cheong House.</p>
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<p>1 MR VICTOR DAWES: We said a moment ago that it is an unusual 2 situation and hence the tragedy. The alphaSCOUT 3 system at Ngau Tau Kok mini-storage fire, in the 4 investigation report there were colleagues who did not 5 turn on the system and lost their lives? 6 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes. 7 MR VICTOR DAWES: So in this regard, this is not a first, it 8 did happen before; you have the experience? 9 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: So after an entry control point, 10 they have to follow the procedures. This is part of the 11 training. 12 MR VICTOR DAWES: So if you look at the report -- I don't 13 propose to take you back to the report, but the report 14 said that without activating the alphaSCOUT, it 15 affected the operation, so it is really a serious 16 matter. 17 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Correct. 18 MR VICTOR DAWES: I believe going forward you have measures 19 to improve the situation to prevent a repeat of the same 20 thing? 21 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Correct. 22 MR VICTOR DAWES: You also mentioned that the Shatin LRU was 23 sent, the light rescue unit, Shatin colleagues were 24 there at an early stage, in the statement to the police, 25 and there was no entry control point at Wang Cheong</p>	<p>1 Let's go back to page 2442. He says the LRU arrived 2 and next to the platform they set up the entrance 3 control point. It seems that there were more than one 4 team to deal with the assistance call from 2701. 5 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes. 6 MR VICTOR DAWES: For these two teams, they set up the entry 7 control point at the same location, but this senior 8 fireman set it up further away. Having regard to the 9 situation, not in the vicinity of the building, just 10 near the fire engine, I'm sure he has his own reason. 11 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes. 12 MR VICTOR DAWES: Does it mean that the situation was pretty 13 complicated and there was a problem with communication? 14 There are two teams, they set up the entry control 15 points at different locations, and another senior 16 fireman set it up further away. 17 This is by no means a criticism. We would like to 18 find out what lesson can be drawn from this or what 19 explanation. 20 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: When a team is sent to handle an 21 assistance call, there is such a possibility. The 22 correct way to do it is the Shatin LRU should go to the 23 Tai Po hydraulic platform to report duty and do it 24 together. But at that time they didn't follow the usual 25 practice. We have fire engines coming at different</p>

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<p>1 times, so because of different arrival times, they may</p> <p>2 have set up the entry control points at different</p> <p>3 locations.</p> <p>4 MR VICTOR DAWES: Is it because of the sheer scale of the</p> <p>5 fire? Let's say they're all from Tai Po. This</p> <p>6 situation could have been minimised.</p> <p>7 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Agreed.</p> <p>8 MR VICTOR DAWES: Mr Chan, thank you very much. Your</p> <p>9 evidence is very important to our investigation.</p> <p>10 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: Other involved parties?</p> <p>11 If not, Mr Jenkin Suen.</p> <p>12 Examination by MR JENKIN SUEN</p> <p>13 MR JENKIN SUEN: Mr Chan, a couple of questions. First,</p> <p>14 Senior Counsel Dawes asked you about the evacuation and</p> <p>15 also the EAS, the emergency alert system. I won't go</p> <p>16 into too much detail about that, but in your evidence</p> <p>17 you said that about 3ish on the scene there were many</p> <p>18 policemen arriving on the scene, and you said in your</p> <p>19 testimony that at that time you followed the same</p> <p>20 cooperation practice with the police; when they arrive,</p> <p>21 they will be assisting the residents to evacuate.</p> <p>22 So my question for you is, the policemen are</p> <p>23 assisting in evacuation, there are some police officers</p> <p>24 entering the buildings. Are they relying on any</p> <p>25 particular ways or any equipment to remind the residents</p>	<p>1 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: You may continue.</p> <p>2 MR JENKIN SUEN: Thank you, chairman. Let me explain to the</p> <p>3 chairman. That is, I understand that there is also</p> <p>4 supplementary information from the police about certain</p> <p>5 police officers arriving at the scene, and for Wang Yan</p> <p>6 and Wang Chi Houses, they did go in to help residents</p> <p>7 from the higher floors to evacuate, and I'm sure the</p> <p>8 evidence has been submitted to the Commission already.</p> <p>9 Mr Chan, let me now invite you to look at what's on</p> <p>10 the screen. Just now Senior Counsel Dawes already asked</p> <p>11 some questions about this. So from here we can see that</p> <p>12 at different times of the day you can see the light</p> <p>13 wells where some fire appeared, including Wang Cheong</p> <p>14 House, which was the earliest on fire. We believe that</p> <p>15 Wang Cheong House caught fire at the light well, so</p> <p>16 that's 14:58. That's close to 3 pm. And then we saw</p> <p>17 the pillar of flame. And then 15:04, 15:09, two other</p> <p>18 light wells in Wang Cheong House caught fire. And then</p> <p>19 it spread to Wang Tai House, including 15:16, 15:17 and</p> <p>20 15:18. So within a matter of a few minutes it already</p> <p>21 spread to that block.</p> <p>22 So it's happening within a matter of minutes. And</p> <p>23 then for your colleagues from the FSD at the scene, am I</p> <p>24 right to say that they could not have expected the speed</p> <p>25 of the spread and then within those few minutes you</p>
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<p>1 to evacuate?</p> <p>2 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Normally they would be using the</p> <p>3 PA system on the vehicles or they may use the megaphone,</p> <p>4 the loudhailer for this purpose.</p> <p>5 MR JENKIN SUEN: In this Wang Fuk Court, do you understand</p> <p>6 what measures did they adopt, or should we be</p> <p>7 approaching the police?</p> <p>8 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: You'd better approach the police.</p> <p>9 MR JENKIN SUEN: All right. Fine.</p> <p>10 Senior Counsel Dawes --</p> <p>11 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: Let me interject here.</p> <p>12 We did examine the issue of evacuation. Should the</p> <p>13 police be going up the blocks to evacuate the residents?</p> <p>14 There are a number of blocks that may be ablaze.</p> <p>15 I don't think you have gone into all these minute</p> <p>16 details?</p> <p>17 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: No, we didn't go into these kind</p> <p>18 of minute details.</p> <p>19 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: Because if they go up the</p> <p>20 blocks, there may be risks. These may be fire scenes.</p> <p>21 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: There is such a risk.</p> <p>22 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: So I think the police should</p> <p>23 also conduct some assessment going forward.</p> <p>24 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: I'm sure that they did conduct</p> <p>25 some assessment when they went up the blocks.</p>	<p>1 would not have known that it would be spreading to</p> <p>2 rapidly?</p> <p>3 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes. We only knew that it was</p> <p>4 spreading unusually fast.</p> <p>5 MR JENKIN SUEN: Of course, with the benefit of hindsight,</p> <p>6 you can see that because of the breeze and so on -- we</p> <p>7 would have to wait until after we have heard from the</p> <p>8 experts -- it was spreading from the east to the west.</p> <p>9 But then from this picture we can see that the upper</p> <p>10 part at 16:22, at the northern part, the fire also</p> <p>11 spread there, spread to that block?</p> <p>12 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes.</p> <p>13 MR JENKIN SUEN: I'd like to ask you a couple more things.</p> <p>14 This picture only show the pillars of flames, but</p> <p>15 then, apart from the pillars of flames, in fact, if you</p> <p>16 look at the spread of the fire, according to your</p> <p>17 observation and understanding at the fire scene, was it</p> <p>18 possible that other scenes of fire might have started at</p> <p>19 other locations, for example, rooftops and so on, and</p> <p>20 that might have ignited other parts of the court?</p> <p>21 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes. For Wang Shing House, it</p> <p>22 started at the middle floors and it was rather serious.</p> <p>23 MR JENKIN SUEN: So just looking at this picture would not</p> <p>24 have been adequate because you can only see the pillars</p> <p>25 of flames?</p>

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<p>1 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes.</p> <p>2 MR JENKIN SUEN: And also there's also some evidence in some</p> <p>3 reports and also in some witness statements saying that</p> <p>4 after the fire broke out in different units, there were</p> <p>5 different extent of damage. I'm not going to go into</p> <p>6 the details, but then some said that there was extremely</p> <p>7 severe damage, others would be seriously damaged, so</p> <p>8 there might have been different levels of damage.</p> <p>9 But then, based on the units, when you conducted the</p> <p>10 assessments, was it purely from the perspective of the</p> <p>11 situation after the fire? Did you look at the</p> <p>12 structural issue, that is, what about the structural</p> <p>13 damage that was done? Because in the evidence it says</p> <p>14 that some of the units were seriously damaged or was not</p> <p>15 very seriously damaged.</p> <p>16 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: It depends on how we look at the</p> <p>17 interior of the unit. With regard to the interior or</p> <p>18 structural damage, we would not be able to see it.</p> <p>19 MR JENKIN SUEN: Okay. Thank you. I have no further</p> <p>20 questions.</p> <p>21 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: Other members?</p> <p>22 Questions by the MEMBERS</p> <p>23 DR REX AUYEUNG PAK-KUEN: Yes. Thank you, chairman.</p> <p>24 I'd like to follow up on the issue of source of</p> <p>25 water because, on the date of the fire, according to</p>	<p>1 DR REX AUYEUNG PAK-KUEN: Because -- well, you need water</p> <p>2 from other sources; right? So in terms of the location</p> <p>3 of the --</p> <p>4 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: Street hydrants.</p> <p>5 DR REX AUYEUNG PAK-KUEN: Because you have the street</p> <p>6 hydrants, where are they located?</p> <p>7 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: We do have specific requirements</p> <p>8 as to where they should be located and it's been through</p> <p>9 some assessments and some very detailed analysis before</p> <p>10 we decide on where they should be located. For ordinary</p> <p>11 fires, that should be adequate.</p> <p>12 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: I think some colleagues have</p> <p>13 also said that your strategy is that you would try to do</p> <p>14 it within the interior of the buildings.</p> <p>15 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Right.</p> <p>16 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: You will try to fight the</p> <p>17 fire within the buildings?</p> <p>18 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Yes.</p> <p>19 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: Are there any other</p> <p>20 questions?</p> <p>21 Mr Chan, deputy director, I would also like to say</p> <p>22 a few words. In the course of this hearing the FSD has</p> <p>23 been subject to some criticisms, and as I've said many</p> <p>24 times, and I'd also like to call upon the relevant</p> <p>25 parties, with regard to the efforts to put out the fire</p>
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<p>1 some of your colleagues from the same division, whether</p> <p>2 it's the fire engine or firemen, that already exceeded</p> <p>3 the PDA, it was multiple times of the PDA deployment.</p> <p>4 But then, according to many residents at the scene, when</p> <p>5 all the seven blocks were on fire, on the TV screen what</p> <p>6 we saw was, if you look at the number of fire engines or</p> <p>7 water hoses that were being deployed -- this was a No. 5</p> <p>8 alarm, and if you look at the number of fire hoses and</p> <p>9 also the water use, was it adequate on the day?</p> <p>10 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: Well, the residents might have</p> <p>11 seen a certain number of fire jets that were being</p> <p>12 deployed. But then within the buildings we also had</p> <p>13 fire hoses and reel systems being deployed. To assess</p> <p>14 how many would have been adequate or enough, roughly</p> <p>15 speaking, five to six jets for every block because of</p> <p>16 the narrow space at the scene. And also it's not that</p> <p>17 easy to advance up the floors, and if all the jets were</p> <p>18 deployed then it might have prevented us from advancing</p> <p>19 more quickly.</p> <p>20 DR REX AUYEUNG PAK-KUEN: And because of the -- some street</p> <p>21 hoses or hydrants were used. So after the incident, do</p> <p>22 you think that the street hydrants would have been</p> <p>23 adequate to deal with such a large-scale fire?</p> <p>24 MR DEREK ARMSTRONG CHAN: What do you mean by "street</p> <p>25 hydrants"?</p>	<p>1 and other respects, they should be separated. Also on</p> <p>2 that day we understand that it's an unprecedented blaze</p> <p>3 and whoever was at the scene would have to make very</p> <p>4 difficult decisions. And of course such difficult</p> <p>5 decisions, if you look back now, you can also analyse</p> <p>6 them bit by bit, piece by piece. But then we do</p> <p>7 recognise that -- well, we are trying to review it. It</p> <p>8 doesn't mean that we are trying to criticise it. We are</p> <p>9 just trying to see what we can do better in the future.</p> <p>10 In fact, I do admire one of the decisions that you</p> <p>11 took on the day, because very quickly you decided to set</p> <p>12 up this sector role commander for each and every block</p> <p>13 at the scene. Because I know nothing about putting out</p> <p>14 fire, but then I can see that this strategy was the</p> <p>15 right decision.</p> <p>16 I can also say that your efforts have also been seen</p> <p>17 by the media and the public, including both you and your</p> <p>18 colleagues. Also in the course of the hearing, many</p> <p>19 residents -- and also Wang Fuk Court residents have been</p> <p>20 very appreciative of the efforts that you put in on that</p> <p>21 day. Yes.</p> <p>22 Yes, we might have adopted a more stringent view.</p> <p>23 With regard to what you did, there might not have been</p> <p>24 welcoming views, but then I hope that you understand it</p> <p>25 because you were the incident commander on that day.</p>

1 With regard to all the colleagues that worked
2 together with you, I'd like to say a big thank you to
3 all of you.

4 So I'm very grateful for you to come today and you
5 are finished with your evidence-giving. Thank you.

6 (The witness was released)

7 (12.49 pm)

8 MR VICTOR DAWES: Chairman, we only have these two witnesses
9 today because of the arrangement. So we are going to
10 have two more witnesses tomorrow.

11 THE HON MR JUSTICE DAVID LOK: So we are going to start
12 again at 10.00 tomorrow.

13 (12.49 pm)

14 (The hearing adjourned until 10.00 am
15 on Friday, 24 April 2026)

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