

'We had enough water to put out fire'

Fire dept denies claim by activist that faulty hydrant in Kepong led to delay in fighting blaze

FIREFIGHTERS arrived in five minutes after receiving the call to a house fire in Kepong and they had enough water to put out the blaze, a department officer says.

Kuala Lumpur Fire and Rescue Department operation and rescue division deputy director M. Fatta M. Amin said the team responded to the Jalan Jinjang Permai 9 incident in a timely and efficient manner.

"We received the call at 6.51pm and a fire engine from the Jinjang station arrived at the scene in five minutes.

"One house was engulfed in flames and fire was spreading to two other houses.

"Our objective was to control the fire from spreading," he said.

Fatta was asked to comment on community activist Yee Poh Ping's claim that precious time was lost in the firefighting efforts as the fire hydrant closest to the Jalan Jinjang Permai 9 houses that caught fire last Saturday, could not be used.

He said the hydrant was partially buried.

"The firemen managed to control the fire from spreading after two water tenders arrived," he said in a press conference.

(Water tenders are trucks with water tanks, used in firefighting.)

Yee urged the Fire and Rescue Department to look into engaging residents living near fire hydrants to report problems with hydrants to ensure they functioned well at all times.

Fatta said the fire hydrants were last checked on March 23 and were found to be in working order.

He said there were some 19,000 fire hydrants in the city and the standard operating procedure (SOP) was to check on them once a year.

He said the closest fire hydrant was unusable and the firemen had to use another one nearby.

Fatta said the hydrant's condition did not hamper their efforts as the firefighters had more than enough water to put out the fire.

"The first fire engine had some 1,800 litres of water and we connected it to the other hydrant to replenish its tank.



Yee (left) pointing to the faulty fire hydrant at Jalan Jinjang Permai 9. — KAMARUL ARIFFIN/The Star

"Two water tenders came from the Sentul and Sri Hartamas fire stations and they had 20,000 litres of water each.

"We managed to put out the fire at 7.43pm.

"Five houses were damaged, of which three were burnt down, while two had about 20% damage," he elaborated.

On the call for the community to take ownership of the fire hydrants, Fatta said the department had a "Teman Pili Bomba" (Fire Hydrant Friend) programme, but there were no volunteers from Jalan Jinjang Permai 9.

"I hope the affected community will sign up for the programme and help us monitor the fire hydrants," he said.

Meanwhile, four households

who were victims of the fire received aid of RM3,000 from the Federal Territories Department and RM1,000 each from Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) and Kepong MP Lim Lip Eng.

The contributions were made under "Bantuan Ehsan" (courtesy aid) from both the government agencies as well as from the MP's allocation.

One of the fire victims, Soo Chia Haw, 44, said the aid would help with their expenses.

"Help that came from government agencies such as the Welfare Department, DBKL and the Fire and Rescue Department was timely.

"Some of the families will be living temporarily in tents at the Sri Delima Sports Complex,

Kuala Lumpur, for about a week but that duration may be extended.

"We hope DBKL can find us transit homes before we rebuild our houses," he told *StarMetro*.

Initial investigations by the Fire and Rescue Department suggested that the fire was due to a short circuit at the corner house, and the fire then spread to four other houses.

The fire affected 33 individuals from seven families.

Federal Territories Department director Datuk Indera Noridah Abdul Rahim said both the department and DBKL would expedite transit home arrangements for the victims.

"We will look for transit homes near their houses and we will take into account their children who are attending school.

"We will also prepare transportation for those with comorbidities who need medical treatment," she said when handing the contributions to the affected families at the Sri Delima Sports Complex.

Lim said he would help raise funds from the private sector for the victims.

"The Kuala Lumpur Education Department will also contribute school bags or stationery for the schoolchildren.

"I will also speak to Local Government Development Minister Nga Kor Ming on rebuilding their homes," he added.

Also present during the aid presentation were Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's political secretary Azman Abidin, Kuala Lumpur mayor Datuk Kamarulzaman Mat Salleh and representatives from Welfare Department.