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Well done, but it can be better, firemen told

PETALING JAYA, Sat. - The Fire and Rescue Department succeeded in saving more than RM3.02 billion worth of property from being razed nationwide between January and June this year.

While praising the department for this success, Deputy Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Mohd Shafie Apdal urged it to strive for further improvement.

He said this was because more than RM291 million worth of property was lost in 6,826 fires, with 28 deaths and 34 persons injured.

"Every fireman should ensure that he is constantly prepared to act immediately when the need arises as there is only a short time available to rescue someone.

"We must realise that our duty is not only to put out fires, but also doing rescue work. As such, it is important that efforts be continued to establish volunteer fire brigades so as to lessen the load on our firemen's shoulders," he said.

Mohd Shafie was speaking at the launching of the new logo of the department's Air Wing at its temporary base at Hangar 76 of the Airod Sdn Bhd headquarters in Subang, in conjunction with the wing's first anniversary celebration.

Also present were Ministry secretary-general Datuk Khalid Husin and department director-general Datuk Dr Soh Chai Hock.

Speaking to reporters later, Mohd Shafie said the department's two Russian-made Mi-17-1V helicopters were ready to help in any rescue effort, especially those involving skyscrapers.

"They have state-of-the-art equipment and can be sent anywhere in the country to help in any possible situation," he said.

Asked if the department would deploy the helicopters to help in rescue efforts in other countries, Mohd Shafie said they would be if needed.

Named Enggang and Pekaka by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at an official handing-over ceremony to the Ministry on Sept 10 last year, the two helicopters began service with the unit the following day.

The helicopters are capable of various roles, including firefighting, hazardous materials containment work, air surveillance, search and rescue operations, evacuations and air transport support.

It costs RM5,000 per hour to fly each helicopter. The Air Wing has 92 men.

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