

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION**

S-FHB(FE)02

Question Serial No.

S147

Head: 49 Food and Environmental
Hygiene Department

Subhead (No. & title):

Programme:

Controlling Officer: Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

Regarding the manpower of Health Inspectors (HIs) to cope with the work of following up hygiene matters of restaurants, please advise on:

- (a) the percentage of the number of cases investigated by HIs at the scene in the total number of complaint cases received by telephone from the public in respect of hygiene matters of restaurants;
- (b) the average time required for HIs to arrive at the scene after receiving complaints by telephone from the public in respect of hygiene matters of restaurants;
- (c) the respective number of cases in which HIs arrived at the scene after receiving complaints by telephone from the public in respect of hygiene matters of restaurants and the respective percentage of the number of such cases in the total number of complaint cases, to be set out according to the time required for HIs to arrive at the scene (expressed in 5-minute intervals, i.e. 0 to 5 minutes, 6 to 10 minutes, 11 to 15 minutes, etc.);
- (d) whether the Department can, in accordance with the operational manual, refuse to send HIs to the scene on grounds of "insufficient manpower" or "avoidance of disputes with the restaurant", as it was reported that the Department had refused to send HIs to the restaurant concerned citing the above two grounds;
- (e) whether the Department had acted in accordance with the operational manual in instructing a complainant to take away the food in question (e.g food containing foreign substances) and leave the scene before the Department arranged time for processing on grounds of "insufficient manpower", as it was reported that the Department had issued such instruction to the complainant concerned;
- (f) how the Department can prevent their staff from not observing the operational manual if the replies to (d) and (e) are no;
- (g) whether the HI grade is understaffed as per the evaluation of the Department, and how the Department evaluates the staffing situation; and
- (h) the relevant estimates of expenditure involved in 2011-12 in respect of the manpower arrangement of HIs to cope with the work of following up hygiene matters of restaurants.

Please reply in the above order one by one.

Asked by: Hon. WONG Yuk-man

Reply:

The information sought is provided as follows-

- (a) All complaints (including those lodged through telephone calls) in respect of hygiene matters of restaurants are investigated by Health Inspectors (HIs) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) and they are required to conduct inspection of the restaurants concerned.
- (b)&(c) HIs will investigate complaints related to hygiene matters posing imminent threat to public health (such as food poisoning cases) immediately, and inspection of the restaurants concerned will be conducted as soon as practicable. Investigation of complaints on other hygiene matters, such as dirty toilets, dirty utensils, emission of oily fume would be conducted within six working days. There are no statistics on the time taken by HIs to arrive at the scene after receiving such complaints by telephone.
- (d)&(e) According to FEHD's operational procedures, HIs should investigate all complaints received on hygiene matters against restaurants and cannot refuse to conduct inspection of the premises concerned. For food complaints received outside office hours, if the complaints are lodged by complainants at home and if the complaints involve presence of foreign matters or dead insects in food, improper labelling, non-permitted preservatives or rusty canned food, FEHD would handle the complaints during office hours on the following working day. If the complainants are at the restaurants where the food is purchased, HIs will advise the complainants that they will arrive at the scene as promptly as possible or, if the complainants so preferred, they may take the food to a designated office for FEHD to follow up.
- (f) Senior Health Inspectors (SHIs) who supervise the performance of HIs will consider reports on complaint investigation to ensure that proper actions are taken.
- (g) FEHD has achieved the 2010 targets of conducting investigation of complaints within the timeframe in the performance pledge. The Department has sufficient manpower to cope with the workload.
- (h) Following up of complaints about hygiene matters of restaurants is undertaken by 299 HIs as part of their environmental hygiene duties. There is no separate breakdown of the expenditure involved in the work.

Signature _____

Name in block letters CLEMENT LEUNG

Post Title Director of
Food and Environmental Hygiene

Date 31.3.2011