

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

FHB(FE)348

(Question Serial No. 4933)

Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified

Programme: (2) Environmental Hygiene and Related Services

Controlling Officer: Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Miss Vivian LAU)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

Under Programme (2), the work of the department involves abating environmental nuisances relating to dripping air-conditioners and water seepage and clean up environmental hygiene blackspots. In this connection, please provide information on the following:

The number of complaints against environmental nuisances caused by dripping air-conditioners and water seepage in the past three years; the average time taken to handle these complaints; the number of prosecutions instituted; the manpower and expenditure involved in handling these complaints; whether additional resources and manpower will be provided by the Department in the coming year for handling complaints against environmental nuisances caused by dripping air-conditioners and water seepage (if yes, the details; if not, the reason(s)); and whether the Department will pull back the Health Inspectors from stage three of the investigation of water seepage complaints and review the manpower shortage problem (if yes, the details; if not, the reason(s)).

Asked by: Hon TANG Ka-piu (Member Question No. 69)

Reply:

The information sought is given below –

In 2013, 2014 and 2015, there were 18 215, 19 722 and 23 431 complaints against water dripping from air-conditioners received by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD). The corresponding number of prosecutions instituted was 6, 3 and 7 respectively.

In 2013, 2014 and 2015, there were 28 504, 27 896 and 29 617 complaints against water seepage received by the Joint Offices of the Buildings Department (BD) and FEHD (JO). The corresponding number of prosecutions instituted was 96, 88 and 61 respectively.

The time taken for investigation of individual complaints varies from case to case depending

on, among other things, the nature and complexity of the cases and whether the relevant owners and occupants are cooperative, etc.

At present, about 290 Health Inspectors (HI) in FEHD are deployed to 19 district environmental hygiene offices across the territory to handle environmental hygiene issues, including handling environmental hygiene complaints such as water dripping from air-conditioners. There is no separate breakdown on the manpower and expenditure involved in handling such complaints. As the nuisances caused by water dripping from air-conditioners tend to cluster in the summer months, there is usually a substantial increase in the workload of FEHD during the same period. To reduce the work pressure of frontline officers, FEHD implemented a pilot scheme in the summer of 2014 and 2015 to hire additional staff on short-term contracts to help handle the problems of dripping air-conditioners in the districts. In the summer of 2016, a team of 20 contract staff will be recruited to enhance education and enforcement actions, focusing on buildings located in blackspots where the problem of dripping air-conditioners persists.

In 2015-16, the operation of the JO involves 64 professional and technical staff from BD as well as 219 staff from FEHD. The estimated staffing provision and departmental expenses incurred by BD and FEHD for the operation of the JO are \$30 million and \$81 million respectively. To improve the efficiency of the JO, 35 staff on short-term contracts have been replaced by 35 HIs in 2015. FEHD plans to replace another 35 contract staff with the same number of permanent HI posts in 2016-17.

The JO seeks to provide co-ordinated services in handling water seepage complaints. FEHD has been working with BD to streamline workflow and procedures to improve the services to the public. We will continue to identify scope for improvement in the work processes.

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