

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

FHB(FE)283

(Question Serial No. 6696)

Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

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

Programme: (-) Not specified

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

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

- 1) What is the frequency of inspection by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department on the tools and wages provided by cleansing contractors? Please set out the contractor(s) who were issued non-compliance warning(s) in each of the past 5 years. What were the numbers of and reason(s) for the warnings issued?
- 2) According to the Department's record, how many cases of "bogus headcount" or inadequate manpower took place due to the manpower shortage of cleansing contractors? How did the Department follow up the cases?

On novel coronavirus outbreak:

- 3) Since the outbreak of the epidemic (in January 2020), how many times has the Department deployed a) in-house cleansing workers and b) outsourced cleansing workers and what is the number of each type of workers deployed each time to perform epidemic-related cleansing work, including (1) entering units with infection cases, (2) collecting refuse from the units, (3) cleansing streets or facilities in the vicinity of the units, (4) cleaning isolation centres, (5) cleaning premises visited or transport carriers taken by infected patients, and (6) collecting refuse from self-isolation units in various districts?
- 4) Has the Government required contractors to perform cleansing duties in buildings upon outbreak of epidemic in outsourced cleansing contracts renewed after SARS in 2003 and 2009? If yes, what are the contents of the contracts in detail?
- 5) Will the confirmed cases of cleansing workers being infected on the said cleansing duties be treated as occupational disease or injury at work?
- 6) Has the Government provided cleansing workers with training on proper use of anti-infection tools (such as face masks and protective clothing)? If no, how can it be assured that cleansing workers can use the tools properly?

Asked by: Hon CHU Hoi-dick (LegCo internal reference no.: 6024)

Reply:

- 1)&2) Staff of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department conduct routine and surprise inspections every day to monitor the performance of public cleansing service contractors, including checking the attendance records of cleansing workers. If any contractor is found to be in breach of contract terms, the Department will take appropriate follow-up actions, including the issuance of verbal warnings, written warnings and default notices with deduction of monthly payment of service charge. From 2017 to 2019, the Department detected respectively 156, 278 and 186 cases of failure to provide sufficient manpower by public cleansing service contractors according to contract requirements and issued written warnings or default notices to the contractors concerned. The Department does not keep a breakdown on actions taken against failure to provide tools by contractors. In parallel, staff of the Department will check the wage information of workers, on a random and monthly basis, through the wage and attendance records of cleansing workers submitted by public cleansing service contractors. The Department will also conduct audit inspections to every single public cleansing service contract at least once a year. From 2015 to 2019, 1 case of breach of service contract for payment of wages by means of autopay to non-skilled workers was substantiated upon examination by the Department. The contractor concerned was issued a default notice, deducted contract payment and given demerit point(s).
- 3) It is a key responsibility of the Department to maintain a hygienic environment. In the light of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) epidemic, the Department has stepped up the cleansing of public facilities under its management. The street cleansing service of public places, including locations where littering and other public cleanliness offences are prevalent, has also been strengthened as appropriate and when necessary to maintain environmental hygiene. The Department has also arranged cleansing and disinfection of the residences of confirmed patients by cleansing workers according to the instructions of the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) and enhanced sweeping and washing of public places in the vicinity of the buildings concerned. Between 23 January and 12 March 2020, the Department carried out cleansing and disinfection for the residences of confirmed patients, public places in the vicinity of the buildings with confirmed cases, isolation centres and the premises visited or transport carriers taken by confirmed patients with the frequency and number of cleaners deployed at **Annex**.
- In addition, CHP of DH has implemented home quarantine measures since 4 February 2020. If necessary, confinees may request the Department, via the Home Affairs Department, to provide daily household refuse collection service during their quarantine period. The frequency and number of in-house cleansing workers deployed to collect household refuse from the residences of confinees between 5 February and 12 March 2020 are set out at **Annex**.
- 4) According to the terms of its street cleansing service contracts, the Department may, if necessary, request the contractors to provide a specified number of cleansing workers with adequate and suitable personal protective gear, cleansing

tools and equipment, disinfectants, etc. for cleansing and disinfection of designated locations.

- 5) According to the Employees' Compensation Ordinance (Cap. 282), if an employee sustains an injury or dies as a result of an accident arising out of and in the course of his employment, or suffers from an occupational disease prescribed, his employer is in general liable to pay compensation.

- 6) The Department attaches great importance to the safety and occupational safety and health arrangements of staff (including in-house cleansing workers and those employed by outsourced contractors). The Department and public cleansing service contractors conduct risk assessment on various working environment settings and take appropriate precautionary measures, which include providing employees with adequate and suitable protective gear and safety training. Cleansing workers will wear protective gear such as face masks, gloves, sleeves, aprons, non-slippery rubber boots, face shields or goggles, coveralls and caps/hats as appropriate. The Department and service contractors will follow closely the latest information and health advice on COVID-19 epidemic released by CHP of DH, and will relay the information to cleansing workers so as to enhance their epidemic prevention knowledge.

**Frequency of Cleansing/Disinfection/Collection of Household Refuse and
Number of Cleaners Deployed by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
between 23 January and 12 March 2020 in the light of COVID-19**

	Frequency of cleansing/ disinfection/ collection of household refuse	No. of in-house cleansing workers deployed (man-time)	No. of outsourced cleansing workers deployed (man-time)
Disinfection for the residences of confirmed patients	72	43	116
Cleansing and disinfection of public places in the vicinity of the buildings with confirmed cases	934	259	2 606
Cleansing and disinfection in isolation centres	23	8	69
Cleansing and disinfection of the premises visited or transport carriers taken by confirmed patients	47	2	80
Collection of household refuse at the residences of confinees	288	92	40

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