

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

FHB(FE)144

(Question Serial No. 2548)

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 Diane WONG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Food and Health

Question:

- (1) Regarding the work to handle dripping air-conditioners by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (the Department), please set out the staff establishment, salary expenditure and total expenditure involved in each of the past 3 years and in the coming year. Please also provide the number of contract staff employed to assist in handling the cases each year and the expenditure involved.
- (2) Please provide the number of complaints received relating to dripping air-conditioners, the number of cases with source of water seepage not identified and investigation terminated, as well as the number of Nuisance Notices issued and the number of prosecutions and convictions instituted against dripping air-conditioners under the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance, in the past 3 years.
- (3) What difficulties does the Department encounter in handling dripping air-conditioners? What are the established/on-going/proposed measures to reduce the number of cases with source of water seepage not identified and investigation terminated?

Asked by: Hon LEUNG Mei-fun, Priscilla (LegCo internal reference no.: 60)

Reply:

- (1) Under the staff establishment of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department in 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21, 328 Health Inspectors are deployed to 19 district environmental hygiene offices across the territory. The staff establishment in 2021-22 is 337. These Health Inspectors undertake various environmental hygiene duties, including handling complaints against dripping from air-conditioners. There is no separate breakdown on the expenditure involved in handling such complaints. The nuisances caused by dripping air-conditioners happen mainly in the summer months. To cope with the substantial increase in the workload during that period, the Department has recruited a special team of contract staff since 2017 to step up inspection, advising and education, as well as to take enforcement actions in summer,

focusing on buildings where the problem of dripping air-conditioners is serious. The number of contract staff and the salary costs for the team are as follows:

	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21 (Revised estimate)	2021-22 (Estimate)
Number of contract staff	24	35	34	45
Salary costs (\$ million)	8.0	12.6	12.9	16.2

(2) The information sought is provided as follows:

	2018	2019	2020
Number of complaint cases received	25 175	24 934	28 198
Number of nuisance notices issued ^{Note1}	3 675	4 664	3 397
Number of prosecutions instituted ^{Note2}	61	91	36
Number of convictions ^{Note3}	68	85	34

Note 1: When the source of dripping air-conditioner is identified, a nuisance notice will be issued to require the responsible person to abate the nuisance within a specified period.

Note 2: Prosecution action will be taken when a nuisance notice is unheeded.

Note 3: Including certain cases against which prosecution was instituted before that year.

(3) When handling cases of dripping air-conditioners, the Department will carry out investigation at the flat suspected of causing nuisance. Some complaint cases may involve several suspected flats upstairs and require more time for investigation. If the investigation is not completed by the time the weather turns cooler, the Department will re-open the case and continue with the investigation before the ensuing summer. Retractable and adjustable video borescope inspection cameras (with LED lamps) are used to facilitate long-range observation at night time or under poor lighting environment, with a view to identifying the source of dripping air-conditioners more effectively. To cope with the massive workload of investigation, the Department will continue to increase its manpower during summer by employing contract staff to assist in handling the cases.

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