

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**EEB(F)073**

**(Question Serial No. 1413)**

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 (Ms Irene YOUNG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Environment and Ecology

Question:

It is stated under the Programme that the work of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department includes abating environmental nuisances relating to dripping air-conditioners and water seepage and cleaning up illegal refuse deposit blackspots. In this connection, please advise this Committee of the following:

- 1) What were the manpower and the total office expenditure for handling environmental nuisance complaints involving water seepage in buildings, as well as the number of cases referred to outsourced service providers for professional investigation and the relevant expenditure from 2020 to 2022?
- 2) How many working days were involved when the handling of nuisance complaints was suspended due to the novel coronavirus epidemic from 2020 to 2022? Has the Department allocated additional manpower or resources to deal with the backlog of complaint cases arising from service suspension?
- 3) Will the Department set and publish work targets or indicators for measuring the performance in handling water seepage nuisances? If no, what is/are the reason(s)?

Asked by: Hon CHAN Hok-fung (LegCo internal reference no.: 28)

Reply:

- 1) The staffing establishment and expenditure of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) and the Buildings Department (BD) in connection with the operation of the Joint Offices for Investigation of Water Seepage Complaints (JO) in the past 3 years are provided as follows:

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
<b>FEHD</b>			
Number of investigation and coordinating staff	241	250	252

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Staff costs and departmental expenses (\$ million)	180.5	202.6	192.1 (Revised estimate)
<b>BD</b>			
Number of professional and technical staff	82	82	82
Staff costs and departmental expenses (\$ million)	66.1	64.9	67.5 (Revised estimate)
Expenditure for engaging outsourced consultants (\$ million)	37.9	47.4	38.6 (Revised estimate)

Generally speaking, JO staff are responsible for carrying out initial investigation (e.g. colour water test for drainage pipes) to identify the source of seepage. In cases where the source of seepage cannot be identified by the initial investigation, JO staff will conduct professional investigation with the assistance of outsourced consultants. Among the cases with investigation concluded between 2020 and 2022, there were 9 780, 10 286 and 11 064 cases in the respective years which had been referred to outsourced consultants for professional investigation.

- 2) From 2020 to 2022, JO did not stop handling nuisance complaints involving water seepage in buildings despite the COVID-19 epidemic. When the epidemic was severe, however, some occupants of building premises were quarantined and isolated, or were unwilling to allow JO staff to enter their flats for investigation. This has, to a certain extent, affected the progress of investigation. With the easing of the epidemic, the situation has resumed normal.
- 3) Since January 2022, JO has published on its thematic webpage on water seepage ([www.waterseepage.gov.hk](http://www.waterseepage.gov.hk)) for public information its “actual performance in carrying out investigations to reports on water seepage in buildings” by year, that is, the percentage of cases with investigation completed and informant notified of the results within 90 days (70% in 2021).

- End -