

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

EEB(F)077

(Question Serial No. 0791)

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:

On reducing the environmental hygiene nuisance caused by water seepage in buildings, please advise this Committee of:

- (1) the number of reports received by the Joint Offices for Investigation of Water Seepage Complaints (JO) and the number of completed cases in the past 3 years;
- (2) the number of cases in which JO applied to the court for a warrant to effect entry into the premises as the owner/occupier refused the entry of investigators to conduct tests and gather evidence;
- (3) the number of cases with the source of water seepage successfully identified, the number of Nuisance Notices issued, and the number of prosecutions instituted for failing to abate the nuisance within the specified period;
- (4) the average time required for completing a case in the past 3 years, as well as the manpower establishment and expenditure involved.

Asked by: Hon CHEUNG Yu-yan, Tommy (LegCo internal reference no.: 26)

Reply:

- (1)-(3) Statistics on water seepage cases received and handled by the Joint Office (JO), which is set up by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) and the Buildings Department (BD) for the investigation of water seepage cases in buildings, in each of the past 3 years are as follows:

Number of cases	2021	2022	2023
Cases received	43 233	39 555	45 033
Total number of cases handled ¹	36 262	38 275	43 367
(a) Cases screened out ^{1, 2}	21 813	24 170	27 215
(b) Total number of cases with investigation concluded ¹	14 449	14 105	16 152
Cases with source of water seepage identified ¹	6 000	5 186	5 669

Number of cases	2021	2022	2023
Nuisance Notices issued ¹ under the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap.132)	5 281	4 587	5 794
Cases with prosecution instituted ^{1, 3}	216	146	174
Warrants to Effect Entry into Premises applied to the court during investigation ⁴	87	45	67

Note 1: The number of cases does not necessarily correspond to the number of cases received in the same year. Some of them are received before that year.

Note 2: JO has prescribed standards and requirements for the investigation of water seepage in buildings. Some cases will be screened out if the moisture content is below 35%, the seepage originates from the property owned by the complainant, the nature of the case does not involve water seepage in buildings or the complainant has withdrawn the complaint.

Note 3: Including prosecution cases for non-compliance with Nuisance Notices and Nuisance Orders.

Note 4: The court issued Warrants to Effect Entry into Premises for all the applications.

- (4) The staffing establishment and expenditure of JO in each of the past 3 years are as follows:

	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
FEHD			
Number of investigation and coordinating staff	250	252	252
Staff costs and departmental expenses (\$ million)	202.6	192.1	195.9 (Revised estimate)
BD			
Number of professional and technical staff	82	82	102
Staff costs and departmental expenses (\$ million)	64.9	66.8	82.7 (Revised estimate)
Expenditure for engaging outsourced consultants (\$ million)	47.4	38.4	45.0 (Revised estimate)

JO publishes on its thematic webpage on water seepage (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 working days (68.5% in 2022). The progress of investigation is subject to a number of factors, including the complexity of the case (such as whether the cases involves more than

one source of water seepage, or repeated or intermittent water seepage conditions so that multiple tests are required), and whether the owners or occupants are cooperative. JO does not keep the statistics on the average time required for completing a case.

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