

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

EEB(F)096

(Question Serial No. 1927)

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”. The Joint Offices for Investigation of Water Seepage Complaints (JO) of the Department and the Buildings Department are responsible for investigating water seepage cases in buildings. In this connection, please advise this Committee of:

1. the staffing establishment and operating expenditure of JO in each of the past 3 years;
2. the number of cases in which Nuisance Notices were issued by JO to the owner of the premises causing water seepage problem in each of the past 3 years;
3. the number of cases received and the number of cases completed by JO in each of the past 3 years, and among which the number of cases with the source of water seepage successfully identified and the success rate;
4. the number of cases yet to be completed;
5. the major technologies currently employed to handle water seepage problems, and whether their effectiveness has been evaluated; and
6. whether there are plans to introduce more advanced technologies for testing water seepage to handle water seepage problems; if yes, the details and estimated expenditure; if no, the reason(s).

Asked by: Hon LEE Chun-keung (LegCo internal reference no.: 11)

Reply:

1. The staffing establishment and expenditure of 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:

	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
FEHD			
Number of investigation and coordinating staff	250	252	252

	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
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)

2. & 3. Statistics on water seepage cases in buildings received and handled by JO 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
Cases screened out ^{1, 2}	21 813	24 170	27 215
Total number of cases with investigation concluded ¹	14 449	14 105	16 152
(a) Cases with source of water seepage identified	6 000	5 186	5 669
(b) Cases with source of water seepage not identified and water seepage continued	4 467	4 384	5 495
(c) Cases with water seepage ceased during investigation	3 982	4 535	4 988
Success rate of identifying the source of water seepage among the cases with investigation completed [$\frac{(a)}{(a)+(b)} \times 100\%$]	57.3%	54.2%	50.8%
Nuisance Notices issued ¹ under the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap.132)	5 281	4 587	5 794

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 water 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.

4. As at 8 February 2024, the number of cases yet to be completed was 12 407.
5. & 6. Since June 2018, JO has applied new testing technologies, such as infrared thermography and microwave tomography, in professional investigation in selected pilot districts where applicable. With the experience gained and data obtained in the pilot application, JO has extended the use of these technologies to a total of 14 districts as at December 2023. Nevertheless, under special circumstances, such as small seepage area, spalling of ceiling concrete affected by water seepage or blockage by tile finishes or other facilities (including suspended ceiling or pipes, etc.) on the ceiling, where the new technologies cannot be applied effectively, the outsourced consultants have to continue to employ the conventional methods.

JO has been closely monitoring the effectiveness of the new testing technologies and will continue to use the new testing technologies effectively to identify the source of water seepage. Depending on the availability of relevant service providers in the market, JO will gradually extend the use of these technologies to more districts.

- End -