

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

EEB(F)107

(Question Serial No. 3169)

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 water dripping from air-conditioners, please advise this Committee of the following:

1. What are the number of complaints received, the number of verbal warnings, advisory letters and Nuisance Notices issued, as well as the number of applications for Nuisance Orders made to the court by the 19 District Environmental Hygiene Offices (DEHOs) under the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department in the past 3 years?
2. What are the staffing establishment of Health Inspectors for handling water dripping from air-conditioners, the number of dedicated teams for handling water dripping from air-conditioners, as well as the number of contract staff in each DEHO in the coming year?
3. Please set out the average, longest and shortest time taken to process the cases received in the past 3 years.
4. What is the existing manpower distribution of the Department during office hours and public holidays or non-office hours?
5. What is the progress of the implementation of the Scheme of Participation by Property Management Agents in Tackling Dripping Air-conditioners by the Department in the past 3 years?
6. Since water dripping from air-conditioners usually happens at night, judgment is often clouded by the dim light environment. In this connection, what technologies are applied at present? Has the use of technology been extended to the 19 DEHOs? Will more advanced equipment be introduced to support law enforcement?
7. Many people use the 1823 app to report suspected cases of water dripping from air-conditioners. However, the Department has to verify the situation before taking follow-up action, and this often causes delays in the processing of the cases. In this connection, will the Department consider allowing the public to provide videos as evidence for follow-up action so as to expedite the workflow? If yes, what are the details? If no, what is/are the reason(s)?

Asked by: Hon LEUNG Hei, Edward (LegCo internal reference no.: 67)

Reply:

1. The information required is set out in Annex 1.

2. In 2024-25, the staff establishment of Health Inspectors in the 19 District Environmental Hygiene Offices (DEHOs) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department totals 337. They undertake various environmental hygiene duties in the district, including handling complaints against dripping from air-conditioners. Details of the staff establishment in each district are set out in Annex 2. The nuisances caused by dripping air-conditioners happen mainly in summer. To cope with the substantial increase in workload during that period of time, the Department has recruited contract staff and set up dedicated teams since 2017 to step up inspection, advising and education, as well as to take law enforcement actions targeting buildings where the problem of dripping air-conditioners is serious. In 2023-24, there were 29 contract staff in the teams. The number of contract staff in 2024-25 will depend on the recruitment situation.
3. Upon receipt of a complaint from the public about dripping air-conditioners, the Department's staff will usually conduct an investigation within 6 working days and give an interim reply to the complainant within 10 days. Excluding cases with investigation suspended till the next summer due to the approach of cold seasons, the average time required for completed cases (those received and completed in the same year) over the past 3 years are in Annex 3. The Department does not maintain other breakdown figures.
4. In addition to handling complaints against dripping air-conditioners during normal office hours, Health Inspectors deployed to DEHOs by the Department will also conduct investigation work at other time periods where necessary. As for the afore-mentioned dedicated teams for handling dripping air-conditioners, their duty time includes public holidays and non-office hours, which facilitates proactive inspections and investigations on water dripping during different time periods of the day, such as early morning and early evening.
5. As at the end of 2023, there were a total of 268 property management agents (PMAs) participating in the Scheme of Participation by Property Management Agents in Tackling Dripping Air-conditioners (the Scheme). In the past 3 years (2021, 2022 and 2023), 4 258, 1 923 and 6 205 complaints against dripping air-conditioners were followed up and handled by PMAs through the Scheme respectively. To further promote the Scheme, the Department will consider giving priority to housing estates participating in the Scheme where talks will be held to go through the relevant knowledge about dripping air-conditioners with property management personnel and residents, and provide them with assistance in identifying the available methods and techniques for locating the source of water dripping from air-conditioners. A dedicated page was set up in the Department's website in mid-2023 to step up publicity and allow more PMAs to understand and participate in the Scheme.
6. Devices such as digital cameras, high definition telescopes, retractable and adjustable video borescope inspection cameras with LED lamps are currently used to facilitate long-range observation during night time or under poor lighting environment, with a view to identifying the sources of water dripping from air-conditioners more effectively. The Department is also exploring the use of 5G technology for installing Internet Protocol cameras and thermal imaging cameras at suitable locations outside the buildings with more serious water dripping from air-conditioners, so as to record the

temperature difference between water droplets and the outside temperature to determine the source of water dripping in real time.

7. Upon receipt of a complaint from the public about dripping air-conditioners, the Department's staff will usually conduct an investigation within 6 working days and give an interim reply to the complainant within 10 days. If the complainant provides relevant information such as videos/photos, the Department will use them as reference or for gathering evidence. Where necessary, relevant witnesses will be summoned to court to testify for the prosecution case.

Number of complaints received,
number of verbal warnings, advisory letters and Nuisance Notices issued, as well as
number of applications for Nuisance Orders made to the court by DEHOs

District	2021				
	Number of complaints received	Number of verbal warnings issued ^{Note}	Number of advisory letters issued ^{Note}	Number of Nuisance Notices issued	Number of applications for Nuisance Orders made to the court
Central and Western	1 520	Not applicable		440	0
Wan Chai	1 770	Not applicable		267	0
Eastern	3 592	Not applicable		325	0
Southern	1 318	Not applicable		54	0
Islands	236	Not applicable		0	0
Yau Tsim	1 341	Not applicable		351	0
Mong Kok	1 387	Not applicable		1 000	4
Sham Shui Po	1 999	Not applicable		326	0
Kowloon City	1 883	Not applicable		67	0
Wong Tai Sin	1 150	Not applicable		30	0
Kwun Tong	2 363	Not applicable		257	0
Kwai Tsing	1 037	Not applicable		30	0
Tsuen Wan	1 723	Not applicable		282	0
Tuen Mun	2 283	Not applicable		32	0
Yuen Long	2 124	Not applicable		208	0
North	987	Not applicable		7	0
Tai Po	822	Not applicable		7	0
Sha Tin	2 351	Not applicable		24	0
Sai Kung	920	Not applicable		17	0
Total	30 806	Not applicable		3 724	4

Note: The Department does not keep a breakdown of the number of verbal warnings and advisory letters issued in 2021.

District	2022				
	Number of complaints received	Number of verbal warnings issued	Number of advisory letters issued	Number of Nuisance Notices issued	Number of applications for Nuisance Orders made to the court
Central and Western	1 196	0	479	201	1
Wan Chai	1 289	496	855	231	0
Eastern	3 062	7	696	202	0
Southern	1 004	0	0	14	0
Islands	189	0	22	0	0
Yau Tsim	1 199	0	233	462	0
Mong Kok	1 321	103	16	538	0
Sham Shui Po	1 707	620	847	354	0
Kowloon City	1 565	742	945	63	0
Wong Tai Sin	826	0	881	10	0
Kwun Tong	1 851	787	911	289	0
Kwai Tsing	810	12	409	32	0
Tsuen Wan	1 730	877	799	200	0
Tuen Mun	1 750	84	718	10	0
Yuen Long	1 820	28	938	48	0
North	762	65	113	6	0
Tai Po	663	78	365	9	0
Sha Tin	2 283	153	1 231	16	0
Sai Kung	862	6	194	17	0
Total	25 889	4 058	10 652	2 702	1

District	2023				
	Number of complaints received	Number of verbal warnings issued	Number of advisory letters issued	Number of Nuisance Notices issued	Number of applications for Nuisance Orders made to the court
Central and Western	1 672	0	782	144	0
Wan Chai	1 577	145	1 001	148	0
Eastern	3 475	57	810	420	0
Southern	1 051	384	348	22	0
Islands	207	28	27	2	0
Yau Tsim	1 719	240	880	377	0
Mong Kok	1 625	15	213	939	0
Sham Shui Po	2 091	670	852	296	0
Kowloon City	2 110	2 237	1 140	86	0
Wong Tai Sin	1 126	1	443	29	0
Kwun Tong	2 417	13	90	49	0
Kwai Tsing	934	1	445	22	0
Tsuen Wan	1 838	1 099	918	356	0
Tuen Mun	1 924	0	614	17	0
Yuen Long	2 186	1	1 448	36	0
North	1 000	14	186	36	0
Tai Po	803	187	504	28	0
Sha Tin	2 474	235	1 110	14	0
Sai Kung	906	0	230	11	0
Total	31 135	5 327	12 041	3 032	0

Establishment of Health Inspectors in DEHOs in 2023-24

District	Establishment
Central and Western	23
Wan Chai	24
Eastern	25
Southern	10
Islands	11
Yau Tsim	22
Mong Kok	18
Sham Shui Po	21
Kowloon City	24
Wong Tai Sin	11
Kwun Tong	20
Kwai Tsing	14
Tsuen Wan	17
Tuen Mun	17
Yuen Long	22
North	12
Tai Po	12
Sha Tin	21
Sai Kung	13
Total	337

Average processing time for completed dripping air-conditioner cases

Year	Average processing time for completed cases (those received and completed in the same year) (number of days)
2021	37.6
2022	34.4
2023	41.6

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