

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO  
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

**DEVB(PL)084**

Question Serial No.

2153

Head: 82 Buildings Department                      Subhead (No. & title):

Programme:                      Buildings and Building Works

Controlling Officer:      Director of Buildings

Director of Bureau:      Secretary for Development

Question:

The Buildings Department established the Joint Office (JO) with the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department in 2006. The objective is to streamline the handling of complaints about water seepage in old buildings and assist in resolving the problems in premises concerned. In this connection, please provide the following information:

(1) Since the establishment of the JO, the number of the following received each year:

	Area	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Number of water seepage complaints received	HK Island								
	Kln East								
	Kln West								
	NT East								
	NT West								
Number of cases handled	HK Island								
	Kln East								
	Kln West								
	NT East								
	NT West								
Number of cases with source of seepage identified									
Number of applications to the Court for entry warrants									

Number of cases gaining entry into premises for investigation									
Average time taken to investigate each case									

- (2) Details of staffing provision, duties and operational expenses of the JO as at 2012-13;
- (3) Details of improvement measures adopted in response to the enquiries and recommendations for improvement by the Ombudsman, and the effectiveness assessment at present;
- (4) Following the Administration's decision to extend the operation of the JO for another two years in 2013-14, changes in the estimated staffing provision and operational expenses compared to 2012-13; and
- (5) The procurement plan for apparatus and equipment by the JO to conduct water seepage tests in 2013-14.

Asked by: Hon. KWOK Wai-keung

Reply:

Water seepage in private premises is primarily a matter of building management and maintenance for property owners. However, if the problem of water seepage causes public health nuisance, building structural safety risks or wastage of water, the Government will consider intervention by exercising the relevant statutory powers. To facilitate action, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and the Buildings Department (BD) have established the Joint Office (JO) as a pilot programme since 2006 to co-ordinate investigation of reports on water seepage and taking of enforcement actions.

- (1) The numbers of water seepage reports received and handled by the JO are kept by Districts. The relevant statistics for the past seven years are tabulated below.

## Number of water seepage reports received

District Council	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Central & Western	448	803	1 085	1 014	1 338	1 177	1 213
Wanchai	826	857	1 071	874	908	835	910
Southern	281	662	924	905	1 132	958	1 138
Eastern	2 311	2 229	2 555	2 761	3 169	2 948	3 315
Kwun Tong	1 048	1 250	1 309	1 494	1 675	1 867	2 161
Wong Tai Sin	275	585	672	763	980	894	1 125
Islands	50	115	185	103	121	94	127
Yuen Long	186	404	519	509	613	612	674
North	196	391	444	564	663	517	675
Shatin	503	1 144	1 406	1 509	2 003	1 796	1 985
Sai Kung	144	344	520	518	695	757	977
Tai Po	186	476	594	626	752	648	826
Kowloon City	2 048	1 974	2 641	2 637	3 116	2 380	2 798
Sham Shui Po	1 298	1 512	1 754	1 640	1 826	1 516	1 771
Yau Tsim Mong	1 485	1 806	2 249	2 298	2 441	2 354	2 492
Kwai Tsing	344	687	996	930	1 188	1 370	1 656
Tsuen Wan	543	1 033	1 306	1 093	1 330	1 234	1 531
Tuen Mun	561	1 135	1 487	1 531	1 767	1 703	1 979
<b>Total</b>	<b>12 733</b>	<b>17 405</b>	<b>21 717</b>	<b>21 769</b>	<b>25 717</b>	<b>23 660</b>	<b>27 353</b>

## Number of water seepage reports handled <sup>Note 1</sup>

District Council	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Central & Western	233	568	736	952	1 109	929	1 257
Wanchai	450	816	723	876	819	701	901
Southern	79	285	512	781	844	1 113	943
Eastern	1 301	1 623	1 501	2 496	3 912	3 273	2 974
Kwun Tong	590	885	959	1 204	1 660	2 030	1 962
Wong Tai Sin	75	259	351	358	419	700	670
Islands	30	95	144	108	95	45	48
Yuen Long	53	367	504	499	426	463	777
North	62	321	356	366	469	901	613
Shatin	144	700	934	962	1 490	1 586	1 437
Sai Kung	47	243	644	498	668	677	833
Tai Po	65	225	348	674	635	688	968
Kowloon City	1 468	2 039	2 354	2 346	2 892	2 580	2 653
Sham Shui Po	1 192	1 319	1 666	1 420	1 704	1 543	2 076
Yau Tsim Mong	782	1 438	1 931	1 805	1 853	2 050	2 729

District Council	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Kwai Tsing	214	598	714	654	1 148	1 512	1 012
Tsuen Wan	246	807	1 159	685	939	608	814
Tuen Mun	263	787	1 172	1 553	1 889	1 811	1 886
<b>Total</b>	<b>7 294</b>	<b>13 375</b>	<b>16 708</b>	<b>18 237</b>	<b>22 971</b>	<b>23 210</b>	<b>24 553</b>

Note 1 As there is a lapse of time between receipt of a report and completion of handling a report, the number of reports handled in a year does not necessarily correspond to the number of reports received in that year.

The number of water seepage reports with source of seepage identified by the JO in the past seven years are as follows:

**Number of cases with source of seepage identified** <sup>Note 2</sup>

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Number of cases with source of seepage identified	1 881	3 246	4 476	4 813	4 737	4 199	4 053

Note 2 A large portion of the water seepage cases reported to the JO did not fall within the scope of follow-up action under the statutory authority of the JO, including unjustified cases and cases withdrawn by informants, and hence investigation was not conducted for such cases.

The JO does not keep statistics on the number of applications to the Court for entry warrants and the number of cases gaining entry into premises for investigation. However, the number of entry warrants granted by the Court in the past seven years are as follows.

**Number of entry warrants granted by the Court**

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Number of entry warrants granted by the Court	15	18	70	120	136	90	101

The JO also does not keep statistics on the average handling time for water seepage cases.

- (2) The pilot programme of operating the JO has been extended for another two years from 2012-13 involving the provision of 64 professional and technical staff from the BD at an estimated staff and departmental expenses of about \$26 million per year, and an estimated expenditure of about \$23 million per year for engaging outsourced consultants to assist in conducting professional investigation on water seepage cases.
- (3) In response to the recommendations for improvement by the Ombudsman in 2008, the JO has implemented various measures to enhance the effectiveness of handling reports on water seepage, namely drawing up internal guidelines on investigation work, formulating milestones for progress monitoring at various stages of investigation, refining operational guidelines on exercising power of entry under the

Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinances and enhancing management information. The Administration is now conducting a review on the long-term role, organisation and staffing of the JO.

- (4) There is no change in staffing provision and operational expenses for the BD in operating the JO in 2013-14.
- (5) The testing methods to identify sources of seepage now used by the JO are generally effective. There is no procurement plan for other apparatus and equipment in 2013-14. Meanwhile, the JO is working with the Applied Science and Technology Research Institute to explore more effective investigation methods so as to enhance the JO's capability in handling reports on water seepage.

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Date: 2.4.2013