

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

**DEVB(PL)278**

Question Serial No.

4226

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

Programme:                      Buildings and Building Works

Controlling Officer:                      Director of Buildings

Director of Bureau:                      Secretary for Development

Question:

1. Regarding the handling of dangerous and abandoned signboards, what were the respective numbers of repair orders and removal orders issued by the Buildings Department (BD) in each of the past three years (i.e. 2010-11, 2011-12 and 2012-13)? For how many of the signboard owners did the BD appoint consultants or contractors in order to enforce the repair orders or removal orders? On average, how long did it take the contractors to complete the works after their appointment? What were the costs? Were there any consultants or contractors not re-appointed due to their poor performance? If yes, please provide the details.
2. In each of the past three years (i.e. 2010-11, 2011-12 and 2012-13), how long on average did the signboard owners take to complete the repair works after having received the repair orders or removal orders? Among the owners, how many of them had completed the works and rendered the signboards structurally safe meeting the relevant standards before the repair orders expired?
3. At present, how many repair orders or removal orders are not yet complied with after the expiry dates? Please list out, according to the nature of the orders, the respective numbers of repair orders and removal orders not complied with in one to three years, four to six years, seven to nine years and ten years or above after the expiry dates?
4. Has the Government any plans to review the manpower provision for the inspection of signboards, and to allocate more resources to enhance the supervision of the progress of work regarding the repair orders and removal orders? If yes, what are the details? If no, what are the reasons?

Asked by: Hon. CHAN Ka-lok, Kenneth

Reply:

1. Where dangerous or abandoned signboards are found, the Buildings Department (BD) will issue advisory letters to the signboard owners (or to the OCs/management companies of the buildings in cases where the signboard owners cannot be identified) to

demand voluntary removal of the signboards. If the dangerous or abandoned signboards have not been removed or repaired after a specified period, the BD will carry out enforcement action by issuing Dangerous Structure Removal Notices (DSRNs) under section 105 of the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap 132), requiring the signboard owners concerned to remove or repair their signboards within a specified period. Where the DSRNs have not been complied with after the expiry of the DSRNs, the BD may arrange consultants and contractors to remove the dangerous or abandoned signboards concerned and recover any expenses incurred in the removal and in the disposal of the materials from the owners afterwards. If the owner concerned is unknown to, or cannot be readily found or ascertained, or is absent from Hong Kong, the BD may sell the materials and, after deducting from the proceeds of such sale any related expenses, shall pay the surplus, if any, into the Treasury.

Most of the dangerous or abandoned signboards identified were removed voluntarily by the signboard owners concerned upon verbal advice of the BD or receipt of advisory letters from the BD. In the past three years, the number of dangerous or abandoned signboards so removed /repaired, the number of DSRNs issued, the number of DSRNs enforced by the BD's consultants and contractors in default of the signboard owners and the expenditure for the appointment of the BD's consultants and contractors for removal of dangerous or abandoned signboards are tabulated below:

<b>Year</b>	<b>No. of DSRNs issued</b>	<b>No. of dangerous/ abandoned signboards removed/repaired (by the signboard owners voluntarily upon receipt of advisory letters or upon the BD's verbal advice, by the signboard owners in compliance with the DSRNs, or by the BD's contractors/consultants in case of emergency)</b>	<b>No. of dangerous/ abandoned signboards removed by the BD's contractors/ consultants in default of the signboard owners</b>	<b>Total expenditure for appointment of the BD's contractors/ consultants for removal of dangerous/abandoned signboards</b>
2010-11	1 245	1 999	695	\$960,481
2011-12	249	961	317	\$652,100
2012-13 (up to 15.3.2013)	249	1 007	128	\$481,842
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 743</b>	<b>3 967</b>	<b>1 140</b>	<b>\$2,094,423</b>

(Note: the number of dangerous/abandoned signboards removed/repaired in compliance with the DSRNs and the number of DSRNs enforced by the BD in default of the signboard owners in one year may not necessarily correspond to the DSRNs issued in the same year.)

The BD does not keep statistics on the average time the BD's contractors took to complete the required works in each case. No consultants' or contractors' reappointments have been rejected by the BD due to poor performance in the past three years.

2. The BD does not keep statistics on the average time the signboard owners took to complete the required works after receiving the DSRNs. The numbers of DSRNs complied with by the signboard owners before the expiry date of the DSRNs in 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13 are 68, 12 and 13 respectively.
3. At present, there are 93 outstanding DSRNs which have yet been complied with. They have been outstanding for one to three years.
4. The existing resources of 549 professional and technical staff in the two Existing Buildings Divisions, the Mandatory Building Inspection Division and the Signboard Control Unit of the BD are responsible for taking enforcement action against dangerous/abandoned signboards and unauthorised signboards as part of their overall duties to implement the BD's building safety and maintenance enforcement programme. Outsourced consultants have also been employed by the BD for regular patrol inspection and supervision on removal of dangerous/abandoned and unauthorised signboards.

The enforcement action against dangerous/abandoned signboards and unauthorised signboards will continue to be carried out in 2013-14 using the existing resources. The BD will closely monitor the work progress of the enforcement action and the adequacy of existing resources.

To enhance the safety of existing unauthorised signboards, the Administration plans to introduce legislative amendments to the Building (Minor Works) Regulation in 2013 to implement the Signboard Control System (SBCS). Under the SBCS, which recognises that many of the unauthorised signboards are in active use and their existence serves a useful purpose of sustaining local commercial activities, the continued use of existing unauthorised signboards that meet certain criteria (e.g. within stipulated dimensional requirements, not blocking the operation of emergency vehicles, etc.) will be allowed after safety checks, strengthening (if necessary) and certification by registered building professionals or registered contractors. The safety check and certification have to be conducted once every five years. Unauthorised signboards not joining the SBCS will be subject to the BD's enforcement action.

Name in block letters: AU Choi-kai  
Post Title: Director of Buildings  
Date: 9.4.2013