

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**DEVB(PL)126**

**(Question Serial No. 0390)**

Head: (82) Buildings Department  
Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not specified  
Programme: (1) Buildings and Building Works  
Controlling Officer: Director of Buildings (AU Choi-kai)  
Director of Bureau: Secretary for Development

Question (Member Question No. 8):

Although the Validation Scheme for Unauthorised Signboards has been fully implemented since September 2013, it is only a voluntary scheme. In this connection, please advise:

1. whether the actual number of unauthorised signboards validated since the implementation of the scheme falls short of the expected outcome; and whether the Administration will step up publicity; if yes, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and
2. as the Buildings Department stated that it would strengthen enforcement actions against signboards that had not joined the scheme or were ineligible for the scheme, and as I have received complaints from residents about many dangling unauthorised signboards around the area they lived that caused a lot of inconvenience to them and endangered the safety of pedestrians, whether the Department will exercise discretion to speed up action on those cases posing extra risk (e.g. signboards in busy commercial areas, which are likely causes of accidents with casualties); if yes, of the details; if not, the reasons for that.

Asked by: Hon. LO Wai-kwok

Reply:

1. Since the implementation of the Validation Scheme for Unauthorised Signboards (Validation Scheme) on 2 September 2013, the Buildings Department (BD) has received 14 submissions of certification under the Validation Scheme. Whilst there was no specific target on the number of unauthorised signboards validated in 2013, it is estimated that some 1 300 unauthorised signboards will be validated or removed in 2014.

In the light of the newly introduced Validation Scheme, the following publicity measures have been taken to disseminate relevant information to the public and the industry:

- (a) a press release was issued on 2 September 2013 to announce the implementation of the Validation Scheme;
- (b) a booklet, “Validation Scheme for Unauthorised Signboards”, was published in September 2013 to introduce the Validation Scheme. It can be obtained from the BD’s offices or downloaded from the BD’s website;
- (c) relevant general guidelines, technical guidelines and frequently asked questions were uploaded onto the BD’s website in September 2013; and
- (d) BD has provided 20 briefings to the industry and the public to introduce the Validation Scheme since May 2013 and will continue to provide briefings to the industry and public.

To further step up publicity, BD is in the process of producing an Announcement in the Public Interest to promote the Validation Scheme, which is scheduled to be broadcast in April/May 2014.

2. Upon receiving reports on unauthorised signboards from the public, priority enforcement action will be taken against actionable unauthorised signboards under construction or unauthorised signboards constituting obvious hazard or imminent danger to life or property in accordance with the prevailing enforcement policy against unauthorised building works. BD has also employed outsourced consultants to carry out regular patrol and investigation of reports on unauthorised signboards under construction. BD will continue to take necessary enforcement action against dangerous and abandoned signboards. The number of dangerous and abandoned signboards to be removed in 2014 is estimated to be 1 200.

BD will launch a large scale operation (LSO) in 2014 with the aim of encouraging owners of eligible unauthorised signboards to join the Validation Scheme. Progressive enforcement action will be taken by issuing removal orders against signboard owners who have not joined the Validation Scheme for their unauthorised signboards or whose unauthorised signboards are not eligible for joining the Validation Scheme. BD will take into account the potential risk that the unauthorised signboards pose (e.g. in busy pedestrian area) as one of the criteria in selecting target areas for the LSO. BD plans to issue 300 removal orders and estimates that 1 300 unauthorised signboards will be validated or removed in 2014.