

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

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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. 48):

My Kowloon East Office often receives complaints about the low efficiency of the Joint Office for Investigation of Water Seepage Complaints (JO), blaming it for failure to solve seepage problems lasting for years and even being unable to identify the source of water seepage.

How many requests for assistance and cases of complaint were received by the JO in 2013-14? What are the number of successfully resolved and unresolved cases? What is the number of long outstanding cases (complaints filed for three to five years but remain unresolved)?

Asked by: Hon. TSE Wai-chun, Paul

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, a risk to the structural safety of a building or wastage of water, the Government will consider intervening by exercising the relevant statutory powers. To facilitate action, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and the Buildings Department have established the Joint Office (JO) since 2006 to co-ordinate investigation of reports on water seepage and taking of enforcement actions. Having regard to the continuous demand for JO's service, the operation of JO will be made permanent in 2014-15.

JO conducts different tests to investigate the cause and source of water seepage. However, as there are many different causes of water seepage in buildings, there may still be cases where the cause or source of water seepage cannot be established despite extensive practical tests conducted, especially where the seepage is not obvious or only intermittent. In the absence of sufficient evidence which proves that the seepage constitutes a contravention of the relevant legislation, JO cannot take further enforcement or follow-up action on the case.

As JO does not keep statistics on the handling time for reports on water seepage, we are unable to provide the number of long outstanding cases. The relevant statistics on the numbers of water seepage reports received, reports handled, cases with the source of water seepage identified by JO and cases in which the source of water seepage could not be identified and investigation terminated in 2013 are tabulated below:

	2013
Number of reports received ^{Note 1}	28 504
Number of reports handled	24 856
• Cases screened out ^{Note 2}	13 062
• Cases with investigations concluded	11 794
- Seepage ceased during investigation	4 766
- Source of water seepage identified	4 692
- Source of water seepage could not be identified and investigation terminated	2 336

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.

Note 2: There are cases which do not fall within the scope of follow-up action under the statutory authority of JO, including unjustified cases and cases withdrawn by informants, and hence investigation will not be conducted for such cases.