

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY****DEVB(PL)329****(Question Serial No. 4258)**

Head: (82) Buildings Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified

Programme: (1) Buildings and Building Works

Controlling Officer: Director of Buildings (HUI Siu-wai)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Development

Question (Member Question No. 60):

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

(1) the following annual statistics of the JO since its establishment:

**Number of water seepage reports received**

<b>District Council</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>
Central and Western								
Wan Chai								
Southern								
Eastern								
Kwun Tong								
Wong Tai Sin								
Islands								
Yuen Long								
North								
Shatin								
Sai Kung								
Tai Po								
Kowloon City								
Sham Shui Po								
Yau Tsim Mong								
Kwai Tsing								
Tsuen Wan								

Tuen Mun								
Total								

### Number of water seepage reports handled

District Council	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Central and Western								
Wan Chai								
Southern								
Eastern								
Kwun Tong								
Wong Tai Sin								
Islands								
Yuen Long								
North								
Shatin								
Sai Kung								
Tai Po								
Kowloon City								
Sham Shui Po								
Yau Tsim Mong								
Kwai Tsing								
Tsuen Wan								
Tuen Mun								
Total								

### Number of cases with the source of seepage identified

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Number of cases with the source of seepage identified								

### Number of entry warrants granted by the court

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Number of entry warrants granted by the court								

- (2) the details of the staffing provision, duties and operational expenses of the JO up to 2013-14;
- (3) the details of improvement measures adopted in response to the enquiries and recommendations for improvement by the Ombudsman, and the assessment of the results achieved so far;

- (4) the changes in the estimated staffing provision and operational expenses compared to 2013-14 following the Administration's decision to make permanent the operation of the JO established with the FEHD as stated in the Programme; and
- (5) the partner organisations, estimated expenditure and timetable in relation to the consultancy study on the methods of conducting water seepage tests to be commenced by the JO in 2014-15.

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, 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 (BD) 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. Our reply to the questions is set out below.

- (1) The numbers of water seepage reports received and handled by JO in the past eight years, broken down by the 18 District Council districts, are tabulated below:

<b>Number of water seepage reports received</b>								
<b>District Council</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>
Central & Western	448	803	1 085	1 014	1 338	1 177	1 213	1 253
Wanchai	826	857	1 071	874	908	835	910	987
Southern	281	662	924	905	1 132	958	1 138	1 093
Eastern	2 311	2 229	2 555	2 761	3 169	2 948	3 315	3 469
Kwun Tong	1 048	1 250	1 309	1 494	1 675	1 867	2 161	2 123
Wong Tai Sin	275	585	672	763	980	894	1 125	1 224
Islands	50	115	185	103	121	94	127	135
Yuen Long	186	404	519	509	613	612	674	689
North	196	391	444	564	663	517	675	670
Shatin	503	1 144	1 406	1 509	2 003	1 796	1 985	2 204
Sai Kung	144	344	520	518	695	757	977	1 135
Tai Po	186	476	594	626	752	648	826	854
Kowloon City	2 048	1 974	2 641	2 637	3 116	2 380	2 798	2 849
Sham Shui Po	1 298	1 512	1 754	1 640	1 826	1 516	1 771	1 824
Yau Tsim Mong	1 485	1 806	2 249	2 298	2 441	2 354	2 492	2 457
Kwai Tsing	344	687	996	930	1 188	1 370	1 656	1 714
Tsuen Wan	543	1 033	1 306	1 093	1 330	1 234	1 531	1 662
Tuen Mun	561	1 135	1 487	1 531	1 767	1 703	1 979	2 162
<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>	<b>28 504</b>

<b>Number of water seepage reports handled</b> <sup>Note 1</sup>								
<b>District Council</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>
Central & Western	233	568	736	952	1 109	929	1 257	1 186
Wanchai	450	816	723	876	819	701	901	974
Southern	79	285	512	781	844	1 113	943	664
Eastern	1 301	1 623	1 501	2 496	3 912	3 273	2 974	3 556
Kwun Tong	590	885	959	1 204	1 660	2 030	1 962	2 179
Wong Tai Sin	75	259	351	358	419	700	670	698
Islands	30	95	144	108	95	45	48	128
Yuen Long	53	367	504	499	426	463	777	428
North	62	321	356	366	469	901	613	602
Shatin	144	700	934	962	1 490	1 586	1 437	1 089
Sai Kung	47	243	644	498	668	677	833	1 162
Tai Po	65	225	348	674	635	688	968	889
Kowloon City	1 468	2 039	2 354	2 346	2 892	2 580	2 653	2 709
Sham Shui Po	1 192	1 319	1 666	1 420	1 704	1 543	2 076	1 688
Yau Tsim Mong	782	1 438	1 931	1 805	1 853	2 050	2 729	2 469
Kwai Tsing	214	598	714	654	1 148	1 512	1 012	1 116
Tsuen Wan	246	807	1 159	685	939	608	814	1 229
Tuen Mun	263	787	1 172	1 553	1 889	1 811	1 886	2 090
<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>	<b>24 856</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 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 the past eight years are tabulated below:

	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>
Number of reports received <sup>Note 2</sup>	12 733	17 405	21 717	21 769	25 717	23 660	27 353	28 504
Number of reports handled	7 294	13 375	16 708	18 237	22 971	23 210	24 553	24 856
• Cases screened out <sup>Note 3</sup>	3 952	6 350	7 144	8 115	11 051	12 219	13 727	13 062
• Cases with investigations concluded	3 342	7 025	9 564	10 122	11 920	10 991	10 826	11 794
- Seepage ceased during investigation	1 430	3 452	4 102	3 876	4 861	4 703	4 810	4 766
- Source of water seepage identified	1 881	3 246	4 476	4 813	4 737	4 199	4 053	4 692
- Source of water	31	327	986	1 433	2 322	2 089	1 963	2 336

seepage could not be identified and investigation terminated								
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Note 2 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 3 These 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.

The numbers of entry warrants granted by the Court in the past eight years are as follows:

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
<b>Number of entry warrants granted by the Court</b>	15	18	70	120	136	90	101	64

- (2) In 2013-14, the operation of JO involved the provision of 64 professional and technical staff from BD. The expenditure for staff and departmental expenses was about \$23 million, and for engaging outsourced consultants to assist in conducting professional investigation on water seepage cases was about \$24 million.
- (3) In response to the recommendations for improvement by the Ombudsman in 2008, 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 Ordinance and enhancing information management. Moreover, the Government has completed a review on the organisation and operation of JO. In addition to making JO permanent, the review concluded that JO should maintain the present organisation and operation in its future delivery of services, and further enhanced measures should be implemented to improve operation of JO. In this connection, JO has launched two performance pledges in connection with water seepage investigation and enforcement action against those cases with confirmed source of water seepage constituting health nuisance.
- (4) The operation of JO will be made permanent in 2014-15. The estimated expenditure for staffing provision and departmental expenses for BD is about \$29 million. Of the current non-civil service contract positions from BD in JO, 17 will be converted to civil service posts in 2014-15. Provision of an estimated expenditure of about \$24 million will be earmarked in 2014-15 for engaging outsourced consultants to assist in conducting professional investigation on water seepage cases. BD will continue to keep in view the manpower requirement for JO.

- (5) In 2014-15, JO will commence a consultancy study on the latest technological methods in identifying the sources of water seepage in buildings. The consultancy fee is estimated to be about \$3.0 million. The study is expected to commence in the third quarter of 2014-15 and will take about 18 months to complete.