

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

DEVB(PL)307

(Question Serial No. 6190)

Head: (82) Buildings Department
Subhead (No. & title): (000) Operational expenses
Programme: (1) Buildings and Building Works
Controlling Officer: Director of Buildings (HUI Siu-wai)
Director of Bureau: Secretary for Development

Question:

1. Regarding the Joint Office (JO) established by the Buildings Department and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, please provide details of its work year by year after its operation was made permanent including:
 - i. the number of seepage complaints received;
 - ii. the number of cases handled;
 - iii. the number of cases involving repeated complaints;
 - iv. the number of cases with sources of water seepage identified;
 - v. the number of cases with applications made to the Court for entry warrants to conduct investigation;
 - vi. the number of cases with applications for entry warrants to conduct investigation granted by the Court;
 - vii. the number of cases with nuisance notices issued;
 - viii. the number of cases prosecuted;
 - ix. the number of cases with nuisance orders issued by the Court; and
 - x. the number of cases convicted and the amount fined.
2. What equipment or instruments for tests to identify the sources of water seepage does the JO possess? Will the JO consider upgrading its instruments or bringing in advanced instruments in the coming year, to enhance the efficiency and success rate in handling water seepage complaints? What are the details, such as the estimated expenditure?

3. Has the Department reviewed whether the JO has sufficient manpower? If manpower will be increased in the coming year, please provide details of the staff establishment, ranks and the estimated expenditure.

Asked by: Dr Hon Kenneth CHAN Ka-lok (Member Question No. 209)

Reply:

1. Statistics on water seepage reports received, reports handled, results of investigation and enforcement actions taken by the Joint Office (JO) set up by the Buildings Department (BD) and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) in 2014 and 2015 are tabulated below -

	Number of Cases	
	2014	2015
Reports received	27 896	29 617
Reports handled ⁽¹⁾	22 056	25 093
• Cases screen out ⁽²⁾	10 961	12 000
• Cases with investigations concluded	11 095	13 093
- Seepage ceased during investigation	4 146	4 920
- Source of water seepage identified	4 816	4 679
- Source of water seepage could not be identified and investigation terminated	2 133	3 494
Entry warrants granted by the Court ⁽¹⁾	74	64
Nuisance Notices issued ⁽¹⁾	4 700	4 988
Prosecution instigated ⁽¹⁾	88	61
Nuisance Orders granted by the Court ⁽¹⁾	31	16
Convictions ⁽¹⁾	60	44
• Range of fines	\$500 - \$7,000	\$800 - \$5,000

Note ⁽¹⁾ : The figures do not necessarily correspond to the number of reports received in the same year.

Note ⁽²⁾ : These include unjustified cases and withdrawn cases, in respect of which no investigation will be made by the JO.

The JO does not compile statistics on the numbers of cases involving repeated complaints and applications made to the Court for entry warrants.

2. In handling reports on water seepage, the JO will conduct a series of appropriate non-destructive tests, including moisture level monitoring, colour water test at drainage outlets, ponding test for floor slabs, water spray test for walls and reversible pressure test for water supply pipes, which are widely adopted and generally recognised to be direct and effective means of investigating sources of water seepage. Outsourced consultants engaged by the JO may make use of different methods and equipment such as infrared camera and microwave tomography scanning device in investigating sources of water seepage. We are not able to provide a breakdown of the expenditure spent solely on equipment.

In order to improve the effectiveness of water seepage investigation, the JO has commissioned a consultancy study on the latest technological methods in identifying sources of water seepage in buildings. The study commenced in October 2014 and is expected to complete in early 2017, with an estimated expenditure of \$4.5 million.

3. In 2016-17, the operation of the JO involves 64 professional and technical staff from the BD as well as 219 investigation staff from the FEHD. While there is no increase in manpower over that in 2015-16, the JO will monitor the manpower situation and seek additional resources under established procedures as and when necessary.

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