

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**DEVB(PL)115**

**(Question Serial No. 2476)**

Head: (82) Buildings Department

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

Programme: (1) Buildings and Building Works

Controlling Officer: Director of Buildings (YU Tak-cheung)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Development

Question:

Quite a number of members of the public have criticised the Joint Office (JO) that it does not handle requests for assistance until the moisture content of a seepage area has exceeded 35%. As a result, water seepage problems cannot be handled promptly and have deteriorated with time. Experts have also suggested that the threshold set by JO is too high. Please inform this Committee of the following:

- (1) the numbers and percentages of requests for assistance received by JO that do not reach JO's threshold of 35% moisture content but reach private companies' threshold of 20% moisture content in the past three financial years;
- (2) whether there has been any review on the appropriateness of the current mechanism with the threshold of 35% moisture content; if yes, what are the details; if no, is there an imminent review?
- (3) whether JO would consider lowering the threshold of moisture content which has long been criticised by the public as over-stringent so as to help residents who have been troubled by the nuisance caused by water seepage and to improve the public's perception of an incapable JO; if yes, are there any estimates on the number of additional requests for assistance, additional expenditure and manpower per year?

Asked by: Hon TSE Wai-chun, Paul (LegCo internal reference no.: 33)

Reply:

Upon receipt of a report of water seepage in a building, staff of the Joint Office (JO) set up by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and the Buildings Department will measure the moisture content (MC) at the location of seepage, such as the surface of concrete or plaster, so as to confirm if the water seepage condition requires an investigation of the source of water seepage. Under normal circumstances, the surface of concrete or plaster contains moisture due to the ambient relative humidity. The ambient relative humidity of rooms with water borne facilities will usually be higher, thus affecting the basic MC level of the concrete or plaster surface in such rooms. Based on experience, it is difficult to identify the source of water seepage for the purpose of issuing nuisance notices under the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap. 132) if the MC level of a concrete or plaster surface is not substantially higher than that basic level. Therefore, JO has set the MC level at 35% or above as the threshold for initiating investigation. JO does not compile statistics on water seepage reports with MC level measured between 20% and 35%.

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