

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

DEVB(PL)045

(Question Serial No. 0738)

Head: (82) Buildings Department
Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified
Programme: (1) Buildings and Building Works
Controlling Officer: Director of Buildings (Ms Clarice YU)
Director of Bureau: Secretary for Development

Question:

Regarding the Joint Office for Investigation of Water Seepage Complaints (JO) under the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and the Buildings Department (BD), will the Government provide information on the following:

1. in each of the past five years, the numbers of cases received and were handled by JO and among them, the numbers of cases requiring professional investigation as well as the numbers of cases in which the investigations and tests could not be completed within 90 working days;
2. the numbers of cases in which innovative technologies and new testing technologies were used by the Government to solve water seepage problems during the investigation in the past five years as well as the details;
3. in regard to the completed cases, the number of cases which were referred to BD and the Water Supplies Department with corresponding follow-up and enforcement actions taken, as well as among which, the numbers of cases which resulted in prosecution, conviction and penalties; and
4. the staff establishment of JO and the expenditure for engaging outsourced consultants to carry out professional investigation in the past two years and in the coming year?

Asked by: Hon TANG Ka-piu (LegCo internal reference no.: 4)

Reply:

1. & 2. Statistics on handling water seepage reports by the Joint Office (JO) in the past five years are tabulated below –

Number of Cases	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Reports received	36 002	36 684	34 169	39 166	43 233
Reports handled ⁽¹⁾	30 605	28 221	28 096	35 397	36 262
(a) Cases screened out ⁽²⁾	14 732	14 571	13 867	21 345	21 813
(b) Cases with investigation concluded	15 873	13 650	14 229	14 052	14 449
- Cases with source of water seepage identified	6 253	5 729	5 663	6 746	6 000
- Cases with source of water seepage not identified and investigation terminated	4 172	3 164	2 891	3 403	4 467
- Cases with seepage ceased during investigation	5 448	4 757	5 675	3 903	3 982
(c) Among the cases in (b) above, cases requiring professional investigation	11 190	9 716	10 078	9 780	10 286
(d) Among the cases in (c) above, cases adopting new testing methods	27	92	620	1 922	2 037
(e) Of the reports received, number of cases in which investigations and tests could not be completed within 90 working days ⁽³⁾	Not available	12 106	12 301	12 925	Not yet available

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

Note ⁽²⁾: These include unjustified cases not meeting the 35% moisture content criterion and withdrawn cases, etc. where no investigation was conducted by JO.

Note⁽³⁾: Progress of investigation hinges on various factors, including:

(a) complexity of the case e.g. seepage involving multiple sources, repeated or intermittent seepage condition, in which multiple tests are necessary; and

(b) whether owners or occupiers of premises are co-operative.

3. Where the water seepage poses a risk to building safety/relates to defective drainage of a building or results in water wastage, JO will refer the case to the Buildings Department (BD) or the Water Supplies Department (WSD) for follow-up action under the Buildings Ordinance (Cap. 123) or the Waterworks Ordinance (Cap. 102) respectively. JO does not compile statistics on the number of cases referred to BD and WSD in regard to the completed cases. In this connection, BD and WSD also do not compile statistics on the number of cases referred by JO which resulted in prosecution, conviction and penalties.

4. The staff establishment and expenditure of the JO in handling water seepage reports in buildings in 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23 are tabulated below –

Food and Environmental Hygiene Department	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Number of investigation and co-ordinating staff	241	250	252
Staff cost and departmental expenses (\$ million)	180.5	202.6 (estimated)	184.7 (estimated)

BD	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Number of professional and technical staff	82	82	82
Staff cost and departmental expenses (\$ million)	66.1	64.5 (estimated)	65.7 (estimated)
Expenditure for engaging outsourced consultants (\$ million)	37.9	38.5 (estimated)	45.5 (estimated)

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