

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

DEVB(PL)077

(Question Serial No. 3121)

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:

To promote the Renewable Energy Feed-in Tariff Scheme, the Buildings Department (BD) has formulated codes and references for the correct installation of solar photovoltaic (PV) systems, which specify the requirements, such as the height restriction, for the installation of solar PV systems in different types of buildings. Will the Government inform this Committee of the following:

1. the respective estimates for the processing of applications for the installation of solar PV systems by BD in each of the past three years;
2. the respective numbers of applications for the installation of solar PV systems in village houses and private buildings that BD processed in each of the past three years; and among them, the numbers of applications approved and rejected;
3. the staff establishment and financial provision of BD for the section that was responsible for the abovementioned processing of applications for the installation of solar PV systems in the past three years;
4. the difference in height restriction for installing a solar PV system on the roof of village houses and private buildings, and the reasons for such a difference; and
5. whether applications for the installation of a solar PV system of 1.5 metres to 2.5 metres in height on a roof in buildings other than the New Territories small houses must be rejected; and if not, please provide the application procedures.

Asked by: Hon LEUNG Hei, Edward (LegCo internal reference no.: 43)

Reply:

1. to 3. & 5. To further support and facilitate the development of renewable energy, the Government announced in October 2018 initiatives including relaxation of

restrictions on the installation of solar photovoltaic (PV) systems on the rooftops of New Territories Exempted Houses (also referred to as village houses). Solar PV systems not more than 2.5 metres in height (Note) may be installed on the rooftops of village houses exempted under the Buildings Ordinance (Application to the New Territories) Ordinance (Cap. 121) (BO(ANT)O) without prior permission from the Lands Department and the Buildings Department (BD).

Regarding solar PV systems in private buildings which are not village houses, the height of the supporting structures should be no more than 1.5 metres in height, in which case the simplified requirements of the Minor Works Control System apply. There is no need to seek BD's permission before commencing such minor works. If the supporting structure of the solar PV systems exceeds 1.5 metres, the owner should appoint an authorized person and a registered structural engineer to submit plans to the BD for approval. Works may commence upon seeking BD's approval and consent. The processing of such applications is carried out by the two New Buildings Divisions of BD as part of their overall duties. BD does not compile statistics on the numbers of such applications processed, approved or rejected, nor have a breakdown of the staff establishment and financial provision involved solely for processing such applications.

4. The BO(ANT)O stipulates restrictions on the height and roofed-over area of village houses (i.e. not more than three storeys, not more than 8.23 metres in height, roofed-over area not exceeding 65.03 square metres). The building design of village houses is relatively simple and uniform. Private buildings which are not village houses, on the other hand, vary in height and design, with more complex surroundings than rural areas. Therefore, installation of solar PV systems on the rooftops of such buildings involve more considerations such as impact on the building structure (e.g. allowable load imposed on the rooftop), fire safety (e.g. effects on the means of escape), effect on the environment and possible nuisance to residents in the vicinity, etc. Hence, the height of the supporting structures for PV systems on the rooftops of these private buildings should be no more than 1.5 metres if the owner would like to go for the simplified procedures under the Minor Works Control System as explained above. If the supporting structure exceeds 1.5 metres, the owner should engage building professionals to submit plans to the BD for approval. This mechanism ensures the safety of building structure, residents and the public.

Note: The space underneath the PV system should not be enclosed and it should not cover more than half of the roofed-over area of the village house. Also, the rooftops on which the PV system is to be installed should be free of unauthorised building works.