

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

EEB(F)096

(Question Serial No. 3070)

Head: (49) Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

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

Programme: (2) Environmental Hygiene and Related Services

Controlling Officer: Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Donald NG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Environment and Ecology

Question:

- (a) As regards the water seepage cases handled by the Joint Office for Investigation of Water Seepage Complaints and referred to other government departments in each of the past 3 years, has the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department compiled statistics on (i) the number of cases completed and the average time taken to handle them; and (ii) the number of cases yet to be completed? If yes, what are the details? If no, what is/are the reason(s)?
- (b) How much manpower and expenditure does the Department expect to allocate to implement the new workflow to optimise the investigation procedures for handling water seepage cases? How is the effectiveness of case handling expected to change after the optimisation?

Asked by: Hon KWOK Fu-yung (LegCo internal reference no.: 24)

Reply:

- (a) In general, water seepage cases in buildings are handled by the Joint Office (JO) set up by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) and the Buildings Department (BD). Some cases have to be referred to other government departments for follow-up action. For examples, cases involving defective water supply pipes will be referred to the Water Supplies Department (WSD), while cases involving building structural issues, defective exposed drain pipes in buildings, or where suspected water seepage source involves actionable unauthorised building works will be referred to BD. As these cases are referred to the relevant departments which will take appropriate follow-up and law enforcement actions in accordance with their respective purview, JO does not keep a breakdown of the number of cases completed by the relevant departments, the average time taken to handle them and the number of cases yet to be completed. The number of cases referred by JO to BD and WSD for follow-up action in the past 3 years are as follows:

Number of cases	2023	2024	2025
Cases referred to BD for follow-up action	1 436	2 200	2 219
Cases referred to WSD for follow-up action	861	1 236	1 415

JO does not have information regarding the follow-up action taken by BD and WSD for the cases.

- (b) In 2026-27, JO will roll out a pilot scheme in all districts across the territory to enhance the inspection and testing procedures for handling water seepage problems in buildings. Infrared thermography will be added in Stage I investigation to expedite the identification of the source of water seepage. If it is shown that the moisture content is higher than the specified level and there is reason to believe that water seepage is caused by the upper unit, a Notification Letter will be issued to the owner of the upper unit immediately, requesting inspection and repair on his part within a specified time frame. If water seepage persists after the deadline, JO will investigate and may recover the costs of the tests during the investigation from the owner after confirming the source of water seepage. This aims to urge the owner of the upper unit causing the water seepage to carry out inspection and repair in a proactive manner so that the problem can be resolved promptly. At the same time, to streamline the procedures and increase efficiency, JO will carry out Stage II initial investigation and Stage III professional investigation in parallel for all applicable cases.

The estimated manpower and expenditure for 2026-27 of JO is as follows:

FEHD	
Number of investigation and coordinating staff	252
Staff costs and departmental expenses (\$ million)	225.2
BD	
Number of professional and technical staff	102
Staff costs and departmental expenses (\$ million)	92.0
Expenditure for engaging outsourced consultants	48.0

The manpower and expenditure for rolling out the pilot scheme is included in the estimated expenditure for 2026-27.

As implementing the new workflow to enhance the inspection and testing procedures for handling water seepage problems is part of JO's overall duties in handling water seepage cases, JO cannot provide a breakdown of the manpower and expenditure specifically for the implementation of the new workflow.

Under the new inspection and testing procedures, for simple and straightforward cases, such as those where Stage I investigation shows that water seepage is caused by the upper unit, JO will issue a Notification Letter to the owner of the upper unit immediately. This is expected to take about 14 working days, which is significantly quicker than the previous practice of conducting an investigation before issuing a Nuisance Notice. Besides, if the scheme can encourage the owner of the upper unit causing the water seepage to carry out inspection and repair in a responsive manner, it will not only resolve

the water seepage problem promptly, but also effectively reduce the number of cases requiring JO's investigation, thereby ensuring effective use of public resources.

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