

Assess the risk of heat stroke to employees

Attention duty announcers, radio and TV stations:

Please broadcast the following special announcement immediately, and repeat it at frequent intervals when the Very Hot Weather Warning is in force:

The Labour Department reminds employers that as the Very Hot Weather Warning is in force, they should assess the risk of heat stroke to their employees and adopt effective preventive measures such as providing cool drinking water, setting up temporary sunshade and providing mechanical aids to reduce physical exertion of employees. Employees should drink water regularly and be mindful of their physical condition. If early heat stroke symptoms such as headache and thirst appear, they should inform their supervisors and seek medical help immediately.

Very Hot Weather Warning issued

Attention TV/radio announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible:

The Hong Kong Observatory has issued the Very Hot Weather Warning.

To prevent heat stroke, avoid prolonged activities outdoors.

If engaged in outdoor work or activities, wear a wide-brimmed hat and light-coloured, loose-fitting clothes. Stay in shaded areas as much as possible.

Drink plenty of water, and avoid beverages containing caffeine or alcohol.

If you feel sick, consult a doctor right away.

LCQ22: Rodent infestation and environmental hygiene issues

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Elizabeth Quat and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (June 5):

Question:

Some members of the public have relayed that rodent infestation is serious in various districts across the territory, and that the discovery of a total of five cases of human infection of rat Hepatitis E (rat Hep E) in Hong Kong since September last year has made them worried. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that the public litter containers in some public housing estates (e.g. Chung On Estate) do not have covers and the rubbish bags inside them are supported merely by iron bars at the bottom of the containers, which makes it easy for rodents to crawl into the containers to forage for food and leave the containers by biting a hole in the bags, whether the Government will replace such litter containers with those of a fully-enclosed design, and comprehensively improve the design of litter containers in public housing estates; if so, of the details and timetable; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) as it is learnt that at present, litter containers provided in quite a number of rural areas and country parks are without covers, which enables rodents to crawl into the containers (while larger animals can even topple such litter containers) to forage for food, whether the Government will introduce fully-enclosed smart litter containers in such areas and country parks; if so, of the details and timetable; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) as it has been reported that the facts that (i) the surveillance areas of the Internet Protocol (IP) cameras installed at illegal refuse dumping black spots having blind spots, (ii) quite a number of black spots not having IP cameras installed and (iii) a lack of coordination among government departments have contributed to the poor environmental hygiene conditions, of the Government's measures to tackle such problems and the implementation timetables;

(4) as the rodent disinfestation work of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) is mainly performed by the cleansing workers of its contractors at present, whether FEHD has (i) required its contractors to provide their workers with sufficient rodent disinfestation training, and (ii) regularly reviewed the effectiveness of the rodent disinfestation approaches and the baits used by its contractors; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(5) as the medical sector is currently unclear about the mode of transmission

for human infection of rat Hep E, whether the Government will expeditiously allocate funds to local medical research institutions for conducting studies in this regard; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(6) as tests for rat Hep E virus are currently provided only by the Department of Health and Queen Mary Hospital, whether the Government will immediately extend the relevant test services to all public hospitals; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(7) whether it will step up efforts in educating the public about the ways to deal with the live rodents they have caught and the rodent carcasses found, as well as set up a hotline to answer the relevant enquiries from the public; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(8) whether the poisonous baits currently used by FEHD for rodent disinfestation are hazardous to the health of other animals (e.g. cats and dogs); if so, whether it has informed members of the public that they should guard against their pets mistakenly eating such poisonous baits; if it has not, of the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

My reply, prepared in consultation with the Transport and Housing Bureau and the Environment Bureau, to the Member's question is as follows:

(1) To prevent refuse and food remnants from spilling and keep housing estates clean and hygienic, staff of the Estate Offices of the Housing Authority will replace any refuse bins that are found damaged when performing their daily duties.

The Housing Department has been examining whether the rodent-proof devices installed in over 180 public housing estates across the territory function well and will repair, reinforce or add devices at once if needed to eliminate rodents and their harbourage points.

(2) The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) has conducted a trial use of solar-powered compacting refuse bins for household waste collection since February 2018 to increase the capacity of the compacting bins and discourage unscrupulous dumping resulting from overloaded refuse bins. In the light of the initial trial results, FEHD has rectified the defects of the compacting bins by employing a more effective waste compaction system, enhancing inlet design, as well as strengthening the components of the compacting bins and improving the components' durability. FEHD is carrying out internal testing on the enhanced compacting bins and will conduct field trials at suitable sites shortly.

In addition, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) has commissioned a study in collaboration with FEHD and the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) with a view to devising designs of

litter containers and rubbish bins against the scavenging of wild animals such as wild pigs and monkeys, and improving the refuse collection procedures in nuisance black spots with concerned departments to prevent wild animals from foraging in litter containers and rubbish bins near residential or public areas. The contractor of the study has come up with three designs of litter containers and rubbish bins against nuisance of monkeys or wild pigs, and field trials will be conducted in selected black spots of wild animal nuisance in mid 2019.

To promote the public education campaign "Take Your Litter Home", AFCD has removed all rubbish bins along hiking trails within country parks by 2017. AFCD has embarked on the trial use of a number of animal-proof rubbish bins at various locations within country parks, such as barbecue sites and camping areas, where rubbish bins are still provided. With sealed design and suitable ground fixture, these rubbish bins have demonstrated a generally effective guard against scavenging by large animals such as wild cows and wild pigs so far. AFCD would extend the use of these rubbish bins with sealed design in country parks gradually.

(3) From June 2018 to May 2019, FEHD installed Internet Protocol (IP) cameras at 118 illegal refuse dumping blackspots across the territory. The cameras are used in conjunction with other enforcement strategies, including preliminary public education and targeted blitz operations, to deter repeated offenders. FEHD reviews from time to time its enforcement approach in tackling illegal refuse dumping blackspots in various districts. If frequent illegal refuse dumping is detected in the vicinity of the blackspots with IP cameras installed, blitz operations will be conducted. If the actual circumstances of individual spots warrant adjustments, contractor will be asked to relocate the cameras or change the shooting angles so as to enhance the deterrent and enforcement effects.

FEHD intends to extend the IP camera scheme for two years starting from the third quarter of 2019 in consultation with the District Councils (DCs). IP cameras will be installed at another some 150 illegal refuse dumping blackspots in phases according to the locations and priorities proposed by DCs. If the hygiene conditions of a particular blackspot show significant improvement after the installation of cameras, FEHD will relocate the cameras to other blackspots and gradually extend the scope of the scheme to cover more than 300 locations.

To combat fly-tipping of construction waste, the Government has strengthened inter-departmental collaboration. EPD and relevant departments will maintain close communication, share intelligence, update blackspots, streamline procedures and plan joint operations and enforcement strategy. FEHD will continue to combat illegal refuse dumping with a multi-pronged approach. Members of the public are urged to observe the laws, be civic-minded and dispose of refuse properly. FEHD has set up 21 dedicated teams to step up enforcement actions against various public cleanliness offences including illegal refuse dumping.

(4) FEHD's pest control contract requires contractors' staff, including

contract consultants, contract managers, foremen and workers, to meet specific qualifications and complete training courses on pest control approved by FEHD or the Education Bureau. Management staff are also required to have experience in the prevention and control of mosquitoes, rodents or other pests to ensure the quality of pest control services. With a stringent contract management system in place, FEHD conducts regular and surprise inspections to ensure that the performance of contractors fulfils contract requirements. If a contractor's performance is found to be unsatisfactory during on-site inspections, FEHD will take actions in accordance with the current sanction mechanism, including the issuance of verbal warnings, written warnings and default notices, and withholding/deducting monthly payment of service charge.

FEHD reviews from time to time the effectiveness of the rodent disinfestation approaches and the baits used by its contractors. If a more effective approach or bait is found, the contractors will be informed accordingly for adoption.

(5) A total of five cases of human infection of rat Hepatitis E virus (HEV) have been recorded by the Department of Health (DH) since 2018 (as at May 26 this year). Investigations by DH revealed that they were all sporadic cases, with no epidemiological linkage so far. The patients' home contacts have remained asymptomatic. There is no scientific information to determine the exact route of transmission of rat HEV to humans at the moment. Possible routes of transmission include ingestion of food or water contaminated by rodents or their excreta, exposure to environments or objects contaminated by rodents or their excreta, and direct contact with rodents or their excreta.

The Health and Medical Research Fund under the Food and Health Bureau aims to fund local health and medical research. Vector-borne diseases (including rodent-borne diseases) were included as one of the thematic priorities for the investigator-initiated research projects in 2018. The priorities of the research covers developing and testing novel molecular biology-based diagnostic assays to rapidly identify locally acquired cases of vector-borne diseases, as well as developing and evaluating strategies to minimise the risk of vector-borne diseases from establishing endemic transmission within Hong Kong.

(6) Regarding the laboratory tests of infectious diseases, DH has been working in close collaboration with the Hospital Authority and universities. DH has enhanced the surveillance of HEV since November last year by conducting further testing on rat HEV in the samples collected from HEV patients, in addition to regular testing on human HEV types. DH will also continue to work with the Department of Microbiology of the University of Hong Kong to conduct further analysis on samples collected from rat HEV patients, and improve the method for detecting rat HEV.

(7) To assist the public in handling live rodents caught in private and public places, FEHD provides round-the-clock live rodent collection service. For buildings with property management companies, the public can ask the property management company concerned or pest control company to handle

the live rodents caught.

FEHD has published a pamphlet on ["How to handle trapped live rodents/dispose of dead rodents"](#) to teach the public how to properly handle trapped live rodents and dispose of dead rodents.

For enquiries, the public may also call FEHD's hotline at 2868 0000 or contact the concerned FEHD District Environmental Hygiene Office.

(8) The poisonous rodent baits used by FEHD are anti-coagulant products available in Hong Kong and registered with AFCD. Anti-coagulant rodenticides are widely used internationally as they are safer than traditional acute rodenticides and vitamin K can serve as an antidote. Anti-coagulants have effects on other mammals such as cats and dogs. Under normal circumstances, large cats and dogs will only be affected by the poisonous baits after ingesting a high dose. The anti-coagulants take a longer time to take effect and will not cause immediate death. Their effects can be neutralised by vitamin K. When carrying out anti-rodent operations, FEHD will post warning notices at prominent places near baiting points to alert people of the rodenticide placed. Bait boxes will be used whenever necessary to prevent accidental poisoning of non-target animals.

LCQ1: Auto-liquefied petroleum gas prices and filling stations

Following is a question by the Hon Frankie Yick and a reply by the Secretary for the Environment, Mr Wong Kam-sing, in the Legislative Council today (June 5):

Question:

In early years, the Government granted sites at nil land premium for the setting up of 12 dedicated auto-liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) filling stations (dedicated stations). A cap on LPG pump prices (pump prices) at dedicated stations is required to be set in accordance with a prescribed pricing formula. As the pump prices at dedicated stations are lower than those at non-dedicated stations, there are always long queues at dedicated stations. At present, the vast majority of taxis and about 60 per cent of light buses are LPG-fuelled. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as some drivers have pointed out that the pump prices at non-dedicated stations are relatively higher, and the method for setting such prices lacks transparency, whether the Government will set a cap on the pump prices at non-dedicated stations by adopting a prescribed pricing formula, so as to

reduce the pressure for the fares of taxis and light buses to rise; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) given that the existing Design, Build and Operate contracts of the various dedicated stations will expire one after another in 2021 or 2022, whether the Government will grant leases for the sites of those stations at nil land premium again; if not, of its plans to keep pump prices at a low level, so as to avoid the fares of taxis and light buses rising substantially; and

(3) as some Lantau taxi drivers have pointed out that while there is no dedicated station on Lantau Island and they therefore have to patronise non-dedicated stations at which pump prices are higher, the fare scale of Lantau taxis is the lowest among the various types of taxis, whether the Government will set up dedicated stations on Lantau Island; if so, of the details; if not, its measures to alleviate those drivers' financial burden?

Reply:

President,

To improve roadside air quality and protect public health, the Government started planning to introduce liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) diesel taxis and public light buses in late 1990s. As LPG refilling network was non-existent at the time in support of vehicles using LPG, the Government had to quickly set up an LPG filling network with a reasonable coverage for launching the LPG Vehicle Scheme. To achieve this target, the Government set up dedicated LPG filling stations (dedicated stations) at 12 locations in the urban areas and offered land at zero land premium to operators. In return, the LPG retail prices of the dedicated stations are governed by a pricing formula under the operation contract signed between the respective operators and the Government for ensuring the price of auto-LPG at a competitive level among auto fuel prices. On the other hand, the Government encouraged oil companies to provide LPG filling facilities at their existing/new petrol filling stations (i.e. non-dedicated LPG stations) to expand the LPG filling network progressively. In this regard, the Government has adopted since 2000 a policy to require new petrol filling stations under the land sales programme to provide LPG filling facilities, subject to safety requirements being met. Since 2011, the policy has been further strengthened, requiring new petrol filling stations to provide LPG filling nozzles at a number of not less than 25 per cent of the total number of petrol, diesel and LPG nozzles at the station, subject to safety requirements being met.

There are now 490 LPG filling nozzles (including 190 at the 12 dedicated stations and 300 at the 56 non-dedicated stations) throughout Hong Kong, with 90 nozzles installed on Hong Kong Island and 400 in Kowloon and the New Territories, of which 20 are installed in the non-dedicated stations in Lantau.

My specific responses to the question raised by Hon Frankie Yick are as follows:

(1) The LPG ceiling prices of the dedicated stations are set in accordance with the established formula stipulated in the operation contracts signed between the Government and the operators, which are regulated by the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD). The pricing formula makes reference to two key elements, namely the LPG international price and operating cost. The LPG international price refers to the LPG international price of the preceding month while the operating cost is adjusted on the first day of February every year based on the change in the Composite Consumer Price Index of the previous year. The dedicated stations follow this mechanism to set the LPG ceiling prices on a monthly basis. The EMSD has been announcing the LPG international prices and the LPG ceiling prices of the dedicated stations by issuing press releases and posting the relevant information on its website for the reference of the public and the trades.

For non-dedicated stations, their operators are awarded land grants through open tender and oil companies will set their own retail price of auto-fuels, including LPG, on a commercial basis. Unlike the dedicated stations which were offered at zero land premium, it is difficult for us to require the non-dedicated stations to follow the LPG price adjustment mechanism of the dedicated stations. Nonetheless, operators of the non-dedicated stations would consider the LPG prices of the dedicated stations when setting their own LPG prices in order to maintain their competitiveness.

(2) The LPG filling network comprising both dedicated and non-dedicated stations is extremely important as it is an essential infrastructure for supporting the operation of about 18 000 LPG taxis and 4 500 LPG light buses at present. Since the contracts of the 12 dedicated stations will expire from February 2021 to December 2022 in phases, the Government will review the operation of the LPG filling network and its demand, and consider the future arrangement for the dedicated stations before the expiry of those contracts.

(3) The LPG filling network has a comprehensive coverage throughout Hong Kong. The Government has no plan to establish additional dedicated stations but will continue, at this stage, to further expand the coverage of LPG filling network by stipulating conditions through tendering of petrol filling stations, requiring the installation of the LPG filling nozzles, subject to safety requirements being met.

There are now four non-dedicated stations in Lantau, of which three are in Tung Chung and one at Chek Lap Kok, providing a total of 20 LPG filling nozzles. They are sufficient to meet the demand of refilling service of 75 Lantau LPG taxis and 6 LPG green minibuses operating in that area. According to the Lantau LPG filling station operators, as Lantau is far away from the LPG depots, the transportation cost is higher and there are also fewer LPG vehicles refilling in the area. Thus, the stations' operating costs are apparently different from those in other areas and it is difficult to make a direct comparison in gas prices. However, when processing the fare adjustment applications for taxi and green minibus, the Government has been considering and assessing various relevant factors such as operating costs (including fuel cost) and revenue.

Thank you, President.

LCQ12: Promoting use of biodiesel

Following is a question by the Hon Frankie Yick and a written reply by the Secretary for the Environment, Mr Wong Kam-sing, in the Legislative Council today (June 5):

Question:

Biodiesel is a renewable energy source refined from oil and grease (e.g. used cooking oil). The findings of a study have revealed that the use of biodiesel to replace conventional diesel is conducive to the reduction in the emission of some air pollutants. However, a biodiesel producer has indicated that it came, under the auspices of Invest Hong Kong, to invest in Hong Kong in 2013 by setting up a biodiesel plant, but since then the Government has not actively promoted the use of biodiesel, resulting in a persistently low demand for biodiesel over the years. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective quantities of biodiesel used in each of the past three years by (i) the various government departments, (ii) the Airport Authority Hong Kong, (iii) the transport sector, (iv) the construction and industrial sectors, and (v) other sectors;

(2) whether it has plans to increase the use of biodiesel to partially replace diesel in the coming three years; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) of the specific measures put in place to promote the wider use of biodiesel in various sectors, e.g. whether it will provide any economic incentives and incorporate, into the land leases granted and renewed for filling stations, a provision requiring the lessees to provide biodiesel or auto-fuel containing a certain proportion of biodiesel at the stations for motorists to choose?

Reply:

President,

Wider use of biodiesel has lots of benefits. Firstly, it facilitates recycling of waste cooking oils (WCO) and converting waste into energy, which support sustainable development of the local recycling industry. Secondly, it helps safeguard public health by channelling WCO to proper recycling outlets thus preventing such waste from getting back into the food chain. Thirdly, replacement of conventional diesel with biodiesel contributes to reducing emission of greenhouse gas (GHG) and some air pollutants. Fourthly, conversion of WCO to biodiesel provides an additional source of renewable energy for Hong Kong. On the other hand, using biodiesel with high biodiesel content by vehicles leads to an increase in emission of nitrogen oxides, and

may not be compatible with very limited number of certain old models of vehicles.

In light of the above, to boost users' confidence and help control the environmental impacts of biodiesel, we have amended the Air Pollution Control (Motor Vehicle Fuel) Regulation (Cap. 311L), and with reference to the standard adopted by the European Union, formulated the specifications of motor vehicle biodiesel for Hong Kong, i.e. B5 biodiesel which is a blend of 95 per cent Euro V standard diesel and 5 per cent biodiesel. The amended regulation came into force on July 1, 2010.

In Hong Kong, biodiesel including B5 biodiesel for motor vehicle use is duty-free. This is in line with the practices of many overseas countries and districts which have been promoting use of biodiesel through offering tax incentive.

The biodiesel currently used in Hong Kong is mainly produced from waste cooking oils generated by local restaurants and other food premises. To promote recycling and waste-to-energy, the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has been proactively encouraging government departments to use B5 biodiesel, so as to set a leading example to promote progressive popularisation of biodiesel in Hong Kong. Since 2012, the EPD has been working with the Government Logistics Department to implement a central procurement scheme of biodiesel. With technical support from the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department, the EPD has been proactively engaging government departments to try out fuelling their vessels, vehicles and equipment (such as boilers, generators and machinery) with biodiesel as a replacement of conventional diesel. The total consumption of biodiesel by government departments has jumped over fivefold from around 2.6 million litres in 2012 to about 14.5 million litres in 2018.

My reply to the question raised by the Hon Frankie Yick is as follows:

(1) (i) Figures on the total consumption of biodiesel in each of the past three years by government departments and the Hospital Authority (HA) are tabulated below.

Year	Total consumption of biodiesel by government departments and the HA (million litres)
2016	12.24
2017	13.75
2018	14.46

(ii) The Airport Authority Hong Kong (AAHK) has adopted an electrification strategy under which business partners in the airport are encouraged to switch their fleets to electric vehicles; and has not purchased biodiesel in the past three years.

(iii) to (v) The Government does not maintain statistics on the quantities of biodiesel used by the transport, construction and industrial and other sectors.

(2) and (3) We envisage continuous growth in the consumption of biodiesel by government departments. To further promote green procurement and the use of biodiesel, the Government has already required, through tendering and contractual arrangements made from March 2016 and January 2017 respectively, the full use of biodiesel by non-road construction machinery in all newly tendered public works projects and public housing projects. Such machinery includes air compressors, generators, excavators, crawler cranes, crane lorries, road rollers, etc. The EPD has also collaborated with the relevant sectors, public organisations and other stakeholders through exchanges and seminars to share the experiences in using biodiesel, thereby promoting its wider use in Hong Kong. Various trades have supported the use of biodiesel. Examples include a construction engineering firm using biodiesel to run its construction site machinery and construction vehicles; property management companies using biodiesel to provide heating, cooling and power for commercial buildings; and a catering group using biodiesel to fuel its vehicle fleet. With the increasing market demand, at present a total of three petrol stations are supplying biodiesel in Hong Kong International Airport, Tai Po and Tsing Yi.

In view of the benefits of using biodiesel, the EPD will continue to explore introducing further measures to promote wider use of biodiesel in various sectors as an alternative fuel.