

Contractor of WENT Landfill convicted for illegal discharge of wastewater

The contractor of the West New Territories (WENT) Landfill, SITA Waste Services Limited, which discharged substandard landfill leachate, was convicted and fined a total of \$28,000 at Fanling Magistrates' Courts today (November 14) for contravening the Water Pollution Control Ordinance (WPCO) and the Water Pollution Control (General) Regulations.

Enforcement officers of the Environmental Compliance Division of the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) conducted an investigation on the suspected sources of wastewater discharge and gathered evidence in August 2018. Wastewater samples were taken from an abandoned gas pipe from the landfill, which was one of the sources of leakage, for analysis. The results confirmed that the contractor had not treated the leachate from the landfill properly in accordance with the license requirements. The EPD subsequently prosecuted the contractor in accordance with the WPCO.

Under the WPCO, anyone who discharges substandard wastewater into a water control zone or violates the relevant license requirements commits an offence. First-time offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$200,000 and six months' imprisonment. A maximum fine of \$400,000 and six months' imprisonment may be imposed on a second or subsequent conviction.

The Environmental Infrastructure Division (EID), which is responsible for the management of environmental infrastructure, under the EPD stressed that the EPD attaches great importance to the management and supervision of facilities by its contractors. Upon learning of the incident in August last year, the EPD instructed the landfill contractor to conduct thorough investigation and rectify the problem immediately, and held follow-up meetings with its management team. The contractor conducted thorough inspections of similar facilities and pipelines to ensure that no similar incident would occur again.

In addition, the EID has stepped up its own monitoring of water bodies adjacent to the WENT Landfill, including the Tai Shui Hang River, has added more sampling locations and is taking more frequent samplings. Monitoring results showed that the water bodies were not polluted. Details of the monitoring results can be found on the EPD website (www.epd.gov.hk/epd/english/environmentinhk/waste/prob_solutions/monitoring_tsh.html). To allay public concerns, the EID has also engaged academics to conduct independent assessment of the Tai Shui Hang River's water quality, with additional water samples taken for independent laboratory testing. The test results show no sign of pollution of the Tai Shui Hang River due to the leachate.