

EPD seriously follows up on complaints against Recycling Store

A spokesman for the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) today (September 28) said that the department recently received a complaint from the public concerning negligent disposal of recyclables by the staff of a Recycling Store operated by a non-profit organisation commissioned by the EPD. The EPD attached great importance to the complaint, and immediately initiated investigation and is stringently following up on the situation.

The complaint received by the EPD mainly relates to improper disposal of recyclables by the staff of a Recycling Store. The department's investigation revealed that some staff of the operator had failed to properly handle some recyclables in accordance with the operating contract in one incident in mid-August. The EPD, in accordance with the contract, has withheld the payment of the service fee for August to the Recycling Store involved and will deduct its monthly service fee as penalty for its non-compliance. The operator has dismissed a staff member involved and temporarily stopped salary payment to other staff members concerned.

The spokesman said that the department expressed its regret over the incident. It has reiterated to all operators under its community recycling network that they must ensure that all recyclables collected are properly handled. Noting that the incident was partly caused by the lack of enough space and capacity in the workshop of the Recycling Store to handle a large quantity of recyclables dropped off by the public within a short period of time, the EPD has advised all operators to implement an appointment system for receiving large quantity of recyclables so as to facilitate the Recycling Stores and the public to handle the recyclables at a suitable time.

In the daily operation of the Recycling Stores, sometimes there is real necessity to discard some materials not suitable for recycling, such as those that are contaminated or non-recyclable in nature. Apart from requesting all operators to enhance publicity to the community on proper source separation of recyclables and clean recycling, the EPD has requested all Recycling Store operators to maintain a full record of waste disposal for inspection by management staff including the department's officers so as to keep in view the overall performance of recycling operation.

The EPD's community recycling network GREEN@COMMUNITY currently comprises over 100 recycling points, which are operated by non-profit organisations. Since the launch of its first project in 2015, this is the first of its kind that an operator was found to have disposed of recyclables improperly.

The EPD has stringent management mechanisms. Should any irregularities, negligence or failure to provide services in accordance with the contract provisions be found, punitive actions will be taken against the operator

concerned in accordance with the contract, which include the issuing of warnings and withholding or deduction of monthly payments. Performance records may have a bearing on the operator's future bidding for the EPD's outsourced service contracts.

The EPD will continue to closely monitor the operators of the community recycling network and their operations to ensure that all recyclables collected are properly treated by downstream recyclers and turned into resources.