

Face detector rations toilet paper in Beijing park



The automatic paper dispensers are set up considering male and female height difference in every toilet within the park. [Photo: Beijing Evening News and The Beijing News]

Automatic toilet paper dispensers using face detection technique are being trialed in Beijing's Temple of Heaven Park with the aim of reducing paper use.

The park is one of the most popular tourism sites in Beijing, and has provided free paper in its public toilets for ten years but has reported seriously excessive use.

Six face detector paper dispensers have been installed in the hope of stopping the overuse.

To receive paper, you have to stand in the facial detection area and be scanned for a few seconds. The machine dispenses paper of a certain length but to get more, users have to wait for nine minutes to use the scanner again.

Personnel have been stationed to show people how to use the new system, however it still takes about half minute for each person to receive paper, way longer than using a normal dispenser.

It's reported the machines in one of the busiest toilets are no longer in operation after people kept complaining about how long they had to wait to get paper. One staff member said the dispensers need to be adjusted to provide a better service.

It's understood the machines will be trialed for about two weeks before going into official service depending on how they perform.

Toilet paper overuse

Paper use at the Temple of Heaven had already been decreased by 8% and 14% relatively in the last two years despite growing numbers of tourists over the same period.

However, it's claimed, some people still lack paper use manners. According to a toilet cleaner at the Temple of Heaven, some people take much more paper than needed and sometimes even take a whole roll away with them; sometimes paper is used up in only twenty minutes.

The manager of the Temple of Heaven Park said the paper has been overused mainly by residents who live around the neighborhood instead of tourists; some people intentionally take paper here for their daily use because it's free of charge.

Face detection dispensers are being used in the hope of preventing such a phenomenon.

Some other parks in Beijing have installed automatic toilet paper dispensers and held promotional campaigns in an effort to save paper. Taoranting Park, for example has seen paper use drop from approximately 30,000 rolls per year in 2011 to around 20,000 rolls per year today.