

FEHD and Police will start stringent enforcement actions against shop front extensions across the territory

A spokesman for the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) said today (October 3) that the FEHD and the Hong Kong Police Force (the Police) will start stringent enforcement actions in all districts across the territory gradually starting from today to step up tackling the problems of illegal shop extension and obstruction. The spokesman urged shop operators not to defy the law and to stop the illegal act of occupying public places to place their goods.

The District Matters Co-ordination Task Force earlier said that in entering the second month of the Government Programme on Tackling Hygiene Black Spots, the main focus is to combat hygiene black spots with illegal shop front extensions leading to street obstruction, in order to resolve an environmental hygiene problem that has been plaguing the districts for years.

To tackle the problem of illegal shop extensions leading to obstruction, the FEHD and the Police have launched a trial scheme since September last year in six districts (i.e. Eastern, Kowloon City, Kwun Tong, Sham Shui Po, Tsuen Wan and Yuen Long). Under the trial scheme, apart from stepping up prosecutions against offenders, the Police would exercise its statutory powers in removing obstructions and require the goods owner to remove the obstructed articles within a specified time. If the goods owners fail to observe the directions given by the Police, the FEHD would arrange to remove the obstructions (including goods) which were placed in public places including the roadside and carriageways.

If obstructions in a public place or carriageways were caused by articles illegally extending from shops, the offenders concerned would be prosecuted. Apart from that, the Police would issue warning notice under section 32(1) of the Summary Offences Ordinance (Cap. 228) specifying the time limit for removal of the obstructions (including goods). If the offenders failed to remove the obstructions within the time limit as specified by the Police, the FEHD would then remove the items for temporary storage.

In the past year, the FEHD and the Police mounted over 316 joint operations in Eastern, Kowloon City, Kwun Tong, Sham Shui Po, Tsuen Wan and Yuen Long Districts with 1 537 fixed penalty notices or summonses issued against obstruction in public places and for cleanliness offences. A total of 342 warning notices which required the owners of the articles to remove the obstruction within the specified time were also issued. Among these, 65 warning notices had yet to be complied with upon expiry of the specified time limits. The FEHD had hence removed about 16.8 tonnes of goods or articles involved, most of which have been ordered by the court to be confiscated.

In analysing the figures of complaints and enforcement, the views received from local stakeholders, and observations on the actual situation in the above-mentioned six districts, the view is that the trial scheme has been effective in tackling the problem of shop front extensions as well as improving the cityscape. The Task Force also recognised that the joint enforcement mode of the FEHD and the Police could effectively combat the problem of shop front extensions. Therefore, the Task Force has approved that starting from this month, the relevant enforcement mode will be gradually adopted in all districts across Hong Kong.

The spokesman appeals to shop operators and other stakeholders not to extend business areas illegally by placing goods or articles in public places or on carriageways causing obstructions to pedestrian and vehicular flow. The FEHD and the Police will continue to monitor and to take enforcement actions to tackle the shop front extension problem.