

Illegal discharge of muddy water exposed by EPD's smart surveillance system again

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has detected a case of repeated illegal discharge of muddy water from a construction site in the Southern District of Hong Kong Island through its smart surveillance system again. The contractor involved, Lermond Engineering Limited, was convicted of three charges in total for contravening the Water Pollution Control Ordinance (WPCO) by discharging improperly treated wastewater and violating the requirements of the wastewater discharge licence, and was fined \$45,000 at the Eastern Magistrates' Courts today (July 18).

Through the smart surveillance system installed, EPD officers noted last year a construction site of a private housing development on Ap Lei Chau Praya Road that was found to be discharging muddy water in waters at Aberdeen South Typhoon Shelter via the nearby communal drains frequently, causing pollution. The enforcement officers then made use of the data collected with the system and carried out a number of blitz operations at the construction site between August and October last year. During the inspections, it was found that improperly treated wastewater was being discharged from the construction site into communal drains. A test result of wastewater samples confirmed that the concentration of suspended solids exceeded the upper limit as stated in the wastewater discharge licence, among which the highest concentration of suspended solids in the wastewater samples was 79,000 milligrams/litre, exceeding the upper limit as stated in the wastewater discharge licence by some 2,600 times. After an investigation and evidence gathering, the EPD then initiated prosecution in accordance with the WPCO against the contractor of the construction site for the three cases. The EPD reminded the contractor concerned about the relevant legal liabilities of illegally discharging muddy water, and directed them to always maintain the proper operation of the wastewater treatment system and to strictly adhere to the discharge standards as stipulated in the licence.

The EPD spokesman reminded all construction contractors that they should provide proper wastewater treatment facilities to properly collect and treat wastewater to comply with the requirements of the licence as well as prevent substandard wastewater from flowing into communal drains.

Under the WPCO, anyone who discharges commercial or industrial wastewater into communal drains not in compliance with the standard of the discharge licence commits an offence. First-time offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$200,000 and six months' imprisonment. For subsequent offences, offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$400,000 and six months' imprisonment.