

LCQ16: Construction waste and skips

Following is a question by the Hon Vincent Cheng and a written reply by the Secretary for the Environment, Mr Wong Kam-sing, in the Legislative Council today (July 7):

Question:

It has been reported that the problems of fly-tipping of construction waste and indiscriminate placement of skips are still acute in a number of districts at present. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the following information on (i) fly-tipping of construction waste and (ii) indiscriminate placement of skips respectively in each of the past three years (with a breakdown by District Council district (if applicable)):
 - (a) the number of reports/complaints received,
 - (b) the number of cases uncovered through inspections,
 - (c) the number of surveillance camera systems installed at the black spots concerned,
 - (d) the number of prosecutions instituted, and
 - (e) the maximum and minimum penalties imposed on the convicted persons;
- (2) given that the Government has, since 2017, allocated two sites located respectively in Tseung Kwan O Area 137 and in Siu Lang Shui, Tuen Mun for placing of idling skips, of the utilisation situations of the two sites;
- (3) of the respective numbers of (i) inspections conducted and (ii) complaints handled last year by the dedicated enforcement teams set up by the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) for combating fly-tipping of construction waste; and
- (4) given that the EPD launched, in February this year, a "HoHoSkips App" pilot scheme in Sham Shui Po District to facilitate members of the public and the renovation trade to book, through a mobile application (app), the service of collection vehicles for collecting small quantities of construction waste generated from renovation works, of the up-to-date number of downloads of such app and number of times for which the service has been used; the channels through which the EPD promotes such service to the renovation trade; whether it knows the total quantity of construction waste collected so far through such service and, among such waste, the respective quantities of construction waste delivered to landfills and to public fill reception facilities for reuse?

Reply:

President,

Tackling illegal disposal of construction waste is one of the key enforcement tasks of the Environmental Protection Department (EPD). The EPD has been maintaining close liaison with the relevant government departments

through inter-departmental collaboration, including exchange of intelligence, sharing of information and holding joint meetings, etc., to collectively monitor the overall illegal waste disposal situation and make concerted efforts to combat illegal disposal activities according to the departments' respective purview and the legislation concerned.

In order to step up efforts in monitoring and combating illegal disposal of construction waste, the EPD has progressively installed surveillance camera systems at about 170 locations of illegal waste disposal across the territory since 2016. The systems operate round-the-clock under all weather conditions, making use of technologies to facilitate law enforcement and enhance the deterrent effect. The EPD also reviews its enforcement strategies from time to time and flexibly deploys the surveillance camera systems to cover different locations so as to maximise the enforcement effectiveness.

In the meantime, apart from manpower deployment for the daily integrated enforcement duties, the EPD has set up four additional dedicated enforcement teams comprising a total of 16 staff members to conduct proactive patrols against waste disposal at various districts and handle the related complaints. This helps expedite collection of evidence and referral of cases to relevant government departments for waste removal.

Through the above multi-pronged measures, the overall situation of illegal disposal of construction waste has showed signs of noticeable improvement. The number of complaints relating to illegal construction waste disposal received by the EPD in 2020 has been reduced by 36 per cent and 18 per cent respectively as compared with those in 2018 and 2019. The amount of construction waste illegally disposed of in public places and on government land cleared by the Government in 2017 was about 9 000 tonnes. With stepped-up enforcement actions taken by the EPD, the amount has been reduced gradually to about 4 900 tonnes in 2018, 3 800 tonnes in 2019 and 3 300 tonnes in 2020. When comparing with the peak, there had been a significant reduction of about 63 per cent.

Our reply to the questions raised by the Hon Vincent Cheng is as follows:

(1)(i) The number of complaints about illegal disposal of construction wastes handled by the EPD, as well as the numbers of inspections conducted and the numbers of prosecutions in the past three years, with a breakdown by District Council (DC) district, are tabulated at Annex 1, while the maximum and minimum fines for the prosecutions are as follows:

	Year		
	2018	2019	2020
Maximum fine (\$)	15,000	30,000	20,000
Minimum fine (\$)	1,500	1,500	1,500

Note: The amounts were the maximum and minimum fines of the summons cases.

The numbers of locations of illegal waste disposal across the territory with surveillance camera systems installed over the past three years are tabulated below. The numbers of such locations with surveillance camera systems installed, with a breakdown by DC district, are set out at Annex 2.

	Year		
	2018	2019	2020
Cumulative number of locations with surveillance camera systems installed	69	128	160

Note: Figures as at year end.

(1)(ii) The complaints about roadside skips received by the Government in the past usually involved road obstruction or illegal occupation of government land. Currently, the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF) and the Lands Department (LandsD) handle complaints against roadside skips in accordance with the Summary Offences Ordinance (Cap. 228) and the Land (Miscellaneous Provisions) Ordinance (Cap. 28) respectively. In the past three years, the convicted cases related to skips are all prosecuted under the Summary Offences Ordinance, with the maximum and minimum fines of \$3,000 and \$1,000 respectively. Figures on the complaints received about roadside skips, advice or warnings issued related to roadside skips found during patrols, as well as cases prosecuted by the HKPF and the LandsD are tabulated at Annex 3 and Annex 4, with breakdowns by police district and DC district respectively.

(2) Since 2017, the Government has provided two sites, one adjacent to Tseung Kwan O Area 137 Fill Bank and the other at Siu Lang Shui Road in Tuen Mun West, to the relevant organisations of the skip operators trade by way of short-term tenancy (STT) for storing skips. Currently, the occupancy rates of the two STT sites in Tseung Kwan O and Siu Lang Shui in Tuen Mun are over 90 per cent and over 70 per cent respectively.

(3) The EPD's dedicated enforcement teams carried out 3 328 proactive inspections and assisted in the follow-up work of 296 complaint cases in 2020.

(4) Apart from continuing to step up enforcement work, the EPD launched in February 2021 a trade-led pilot scheme on collection and recycling of construction waste at district level with the funding support of the Recycling Fund, and the first project was rolled out in Sham Shui Po District. Through the setting up of convenient collection points for construction waste and the use of smart skips and smart technologies (e.g. the mobile application "HoHoSkips" for service booking) to collect construction waste generated from small-scale renovation works, the renovation trade is provided with a convenient, time-saving and efficient construction waste collection service with a view to reducing illegal dumping of construction waste at source.

The EPD publicises the pilot project among members of the public, the renovation trade, property management companies and property intermediaries through different ways. They include distributing leaflets and posters, disseminating promotional electronic mails and messages, launching a publicity website, producing promotional videos, posting messages on social platforms, displaying banners in the district, conducting outreach visits, etc.

Since the launch of the pilot project on February 26, 2021 up till end-May, the total number of downloads of the mobile application has exceeded 900, and about 70 times of pre-booked collection service have been provided with some 29 tonnes of construction waste collected in total. Of the 29 tonnes of construction waste collected, 3.2 tonnes, 5.6 tonnes and 20.3 tonnes were collected in March, April and May respectively, reflecting a growing use of the service by the local community. After sorting, only less than five tonnes were sent to landfills for disposal while the remaining 24 tonnes or so were sent to public fill reception facilities for recycling, and the recovery rate exceeded 80 per cent.

The EPD has stepped up enforcement actions against illegal disposal of construction waste in Sham Shui Po District during the implementation of the pilot project. In May, some 32 tonnes of fly-tipped construction waste found in the district was referred to other relevant departments for clearance. The EPD is now verifying with relevant departments the total quantity of fly-tipped construction waste that has been cleared during the project period with a view to evaluating the effectiveness of the pilot scheme. As compared to the average of about 70 tonnes of fly-tipped construction waste cleared per month by relevant departments in Sham Shui Po previously, the quantity of construction waste collected using the "HoHoSkips" under the pilot project was equivalent to nearly 30 per cent of the monthly average. The EPD will proactively liaise with the local community and take into account the users' views so as to enhance the service. Moreover, the EPD will step up the promotional efforts and enforcement actions by, inter alia, strengthening the use of mobile surveillance camera systems and organising blitz operations. This aims to promote wider use of the collection service in the trade, thus increasing the construction waste collection rate. Besides continuous enhancement of the pilot project in Sham Shui Po including addition of collection points in the district, we will launch the same type of pilot project in Yuen Long, Sha Tin and Tai Po districts in mid-July. Producers of small quantities of construction waste can use the mobile application of "HoHoSkips" to make bookings for collection service in these districts. It is expected that, as a result, more construction waste will be collected and more practitioners in the renovation trade will use the service under the pilot scheme, hence further increasing the collection rate.