

LCQ18: Management of public toilets

Following is a question by the Hon Michael Tien and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (May 27):

Question:

Amid the Coronavirus Disease 2019 epidemic, the Government urges members of the public through numerous channels to wash hands frequently and, after using the toilet, put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading causative agents. However, I have received complaints in recent months alleging that the Heung Che Street Public Toilet in Tsuen Wan, even after the completion of its enhancement works, unexpectedly had no flush water supply, and it was only after I made a referral of such complaints that the problem was resolved. In fact, I lodged a complaint with the Government in as early as 2019 about problems such as insufficient supply of liquid soap and damages to wash hand basins in the Tsuen Wan Multi-storey Car Park Building Public Toilet that had occurred soon after the completion of the refurbishment thereof. There are comments that although the Government has planned to spend about \$600 million for implementing the Enhanced Public Toilet Refurbishment Programme over a five-year period starting from 2019-2020, the Government's monitoring ability is open to doubt, and similar problems may still plague public toilets, making it impossible to achieve the objective of enhancing the hygiene condition of public toilets. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective numbers of (i) routine and (ii) surprise inspections on public toilets conducted by the staff of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department in each month of last year, and set out in a table, by District Council (DC) district, the average number of inspections conducted on each public toilet;

(2) of the number of complaints about public toilets received by the Government in each of the past three years, with a breakdown by DC district and the major subject matter of the complaints; and

(3) as the Government has indicated that it has taken additional measures in response to the epidemic to enhance cleansing of public toilets, of the effectiveness of such measures?

Reply:

President,

The Government has allocated additional resources for implementing the Enhanced Public Toilet Refurbishment Programme to speed up the refurbishment of public toilets managed by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD).

My reply to the various parts of the question is as follows:

(1) Generally speaking, FEHD staff conduct inspections of public toilets with high usage rate or at tourist spots at least once a day, and on average once a day or every other day for those with lower usage. For public toilets located in remote areas and with low usage, the FEHD will determine an appropriate inspection frequency having regard to the circumstances.

On top of routine inspections, FEHD staff conduct surprise inspections to monitor the contractors' performance of cleansing services against the standard stipulated in the contracts.

The number of inspections of public toilets conducted by the FEHD last year (January to December 2019) by District Council (DC) district is tabulated in Annex 1. Separate breakdown of the number of routine and surprise inspections is not readily available.

(2) In 2017, 2018 and 2019, the FEHD received 2 913, 2 626 and 2 367 complaints about public toilets respectively, mainly relating to services and management of public toilets as well as odour. A breakdown of these complaints by DC district is tabulated in Annex 2.

(3) In accordance with the health advice issued by the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health, the FEHD has taken effective measures for disinfection and cleansing of public toilets by using 1:99 diluted household bleach every two hours for toilets with attendant services and at least twice daily for toilets without attendant services.