

LCQ3: Improving staff convenience facilities at public refuse collection points

Following is a question by the Hon Lam Chun-sing and a reply by the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan, in the Legislative Council today (November 29):

Question:

It has been reported that many public refuse collection points (RCPs) lack staff convenience facilities, including the absence of individual rest rooms, changing rooms and toilets, and insufficient furniture such as lockers, tables and chairs. Some cleansing workers even have to scavenge for waste furniture and electrical appliances for use at RCPs. In addition, many village-type RCPs lack water and electricity facilities, as well as areas for short breaks and meals. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will study the introduction of a scheme to improve various public RCPs and expedite the improvement, refurbishment or re-provisioning of some permanent off-street public RCPs with poor staff convenience facilities; if so, of the details and timetable; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) in the light of the Occupational Safety and Health Council's conversion of medium-sized modular houses into "Solar Cooling Kiosks" for use by outdoor workers, whether the Government will consider using this as a model for setting up mobile rest kiosks in rural and remote areas, so as to provide frontline cleansing workers with a better resting environment; and

(3) whether it will study the formulation of a building design code for staff convenience facilities at public RCPs, such as classifying RCPs according to their gross floor area and type, and requiring the authorities to provide corresponding staff convenience facilities based on such classification; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Government attaches great importance to the working and resting environment of frontline cleansing workers, including civil servants and outsourced service contractor workers, who provide essential public services. Since the inauguration of the incumbent Government, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) had conducted a comprehensive review on the accommodation arrangement of the basic needs of frontline cleansing

workers, including drinking water, places for a short break, water for cleansing tools and toilet facilities. Results of the review confirmed that the needs of the frontline cleansing workers have been accommodated. Due to geographical constraints, some facilities may be located outside the workplace. Although the relevant facilities are all located within 10-minute walk from the workplace, we have noticed that some frontline workers choose to rest or eat inside the refuse collection points (RCPs) or in open areas for convenience or other reasons. Subject to objective conditions, the FEHD will further improve the working condition of workers and provide more convenient staff facilities through refurbishment or facelifting of RCPs.

My reply to the question raised by the Hon Lam Chun-sing is as follows:

(1) and (2) At present, the FEHD provides approximately 170 off-street RCPs in urban areas, in which refuse collection vehicles can enter for collecting refuse instead of having to handle it on the roadside. It also provides around 900 village-type RCPs in rural areas. While there are cleansing workers stationed at off-street RCPs, there are none stationed at village-type RCPs. Instead, mobile cleansing teams are responsible for cleaning up refuse at village-type RCPs regularly every day.

At present, most off-street RCPs are equipped with facilities that can enable workers to work, rest temporarily and take meals, subject to actual circumstances. These facilities include resting space, changing rooms, storage space, toilets, shower cubicles, cold and hot water dispensers, microwave ovens, electric steamers, refrigerators, electric fans, tables and chairs and power sockets. Among the 163 permanent off-street RCPs, various facilities have been provided in 147 RCPs, out of which 92 RCPs have changing facilities, 116 RCPs have storage facilities, 127 RCPs have refrigerators, 111 RCPs have food reheating equipment and 63 RCPs have resting space. Nevertheless, the aforementioned facilities cannot be provided in 16 RCPs due to geographic constraints. Apart from the aforementioned facilities, individual resting rooms and air conditioning systems, etc, will be provided in 11 newly built off-street RCPs expected to be completed from 2024 onwards.

The FEHD has, in collaboration with the Architectural Services Department, progressively conducted comprehensive refurbishment and facelifting works for older off-street RCPs. Resting rooms and relevant facilities will be provided as far as possible, subject to the actual circumstances of the venues. Since 2020, refurbishment or facelifting works for 38 off-street RCPs have commenced, out of which the works of 14 RCPs have been completed, and the remaining ones are in progress. The works of another 11 RCPs are expected to commence in 2024. While it may not be possible to provide all facilities at individual off-street RCPs owing to space constraints, the FEHD will resort to other means, including arranging cleansing workers to use the relevant facilities at nearby venues of the department, etc.

Village-type RCPs are generally smaller in size and have no attendants deployed to station there. Besides, due to geographic constraints, staff facilities cannot be provided in those RCPs. The FEHD will arrange workers to

use facilities at nearby off-street RCPs or other venues of the department as far as possible.

To further enhance the resting environment of cleansing workers in rural areas, the FEHD has put on trial the solar cooling kiosks in three districts in summer this year. These kiosks are equipped with facilities powered by solar energy, including air-coolers, electric fans and exhaust fans, and the preliminary assessment has shown satisfactory results. The FEHD plans to install 54 kiosks in 12 districts and provide similar solar-powered facilities in 15 resting and storage places in rural areas for cleansing workers to use before April 2024. The FEHD will review the actual operational effectiveness of these solar cooling kiosks and collect views from frontline workers in order to optimise the design and operation of the relevant facilities to better meet frontline workers' needs. Subject to the review's results, the FEHD will identify more suitable locations for providing facilities for workers to rest and take meals.

(3) The Accommodation Regulations stipulate the standards for the design of all government buildings, including the provision of adequate staff facilities according to the number of workers. For example, the building design standards stipulate that each worker is entitled to certain changing and storage spaces. All newly built off-street RCPs are required to provide facilities based on the number of workers in compliance with the standards.

Apart from the building design standards, the FEHD, together with the relevant department, has reviewed the size of the resting room in off-street RCPs, in order to improve the resting environment and facilities for cleansing workers. Under the new standard, each newly built and reprovisioned off-street RCP will be fitted with a staff resting room of at least 20 square meters, equipped with tables and chairs and relevant facilities, for accommodating 10 to 15 workers to use. Such standard has been incorporated in the FEHD's Handbook On Standard Features for RCPs for implementation.

As for village-type RCPs, the FEHD will continue to provide resting facilities for workers at appropriate locations nearby, and will put up notices at all roll-call points which clearly indicate the locations of facilities, such as drinking water dispensers, toilets and areas for short breaks, available in the vicinity of each workplace, so that frontline cleansing workers will be aware of and can use such facilities.