

Operating company of Ritz-Carlton Hong Kong convicted for discharging substandard wastewater

The Ritz-Carlton Hong Kong in West Kowloon discharged substandard wastewater into communal sewers and thereby violated the requirements of the wastewater discharge licence. Its operating company, Best Winners Limited, was fined \$15,000 by Kwun Tong Magistrates' Courts today (February 14) for contravening the Water Pollution Control Ordinance (WPCO).

Environmental Protection Department (EPD) enforcement officers conducted an inspection at the hotel on August 10 last year and found that the wastewater at the discharge outlet from one of the grease traps of the hotel was turbid and greasy. It was suspected that the grease trap was not operating properly, resulting in the discharge of substandard wastewater into communal sewers. The EPD officers then collected wastewater samples for analysis and the result showed that the concentration of oil and grease exceeded the upper limits of the wastewater discharge licence by 3.8 times. The department prosecuted the operating company of the hotel in accordance with the WPCO. The operating company has subsequently taken improvement measures, including installing an automatic chemical dosing system for treatment of oil and grease in wastewater, and conducting regular cleaning of grease traps to ensure their proper operation.

A spokesperson for the EPD reminded all wastewater discharge licensees, including the hotel operating company, that they should arrange regular cleaning and maintenance of the grease traps and wastewater treatment facilities to ensure proper operation of these facilities. They should also strictly adhere to the discharge standards as stipulated in the licence to prevent the discharge of substandard wastewater into the sewers, which may lead to blockage of sewers downstream, or adversely affect the normal operation of the Government's sewage treatment plants.

Under the WPCO, anyone who discharges commercial or industrial wastewater into communal sewers not in compliance with the standard of the discharge licence commits an offence. Offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$200,000 and six months' imprisonment.