

Producer Responsibility Scheme on Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment commences today (with photos)

The Producer Responsibility Scheme on Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE), or in short WPRS, came into effect today (August 1). It covers air-conditioners, refrigerators, washing machines, televisions, computers, printers, scanners and monitors (collectively referred to as regulated electrical equipment, or REE). Today marks another important milestone in Hong Kong's waste reduction and recycling efforts, and the scheme facilitates the collection of WEEE generated locally for proper recycling and turning them into resources.

The Secretary for the Environment, Mr Wong Kam-sing, and the Chairman of the Hong Kong and Kowloon Electrical Appliances Merchants Association, Dr David Mong, today visited a few REE retail stores in a shopping mall in Causeway Bay. During the visit, they spoke to some frontline staff of the retail stores to learn more about their operation on the first day of the implementation of the WPRS.

Mr Wong said, "Producer responsibility schemes are built upon the concept of 'eco-responsibility', where different stakeholders along the supply chain share the responsibility for proper treatment and recycling of the concerned products. This requires the shared responsibility and concerted efforts by all parties, including suppliers and sellers of the products, as well as consumers."

Starting today, REE sellers are required to arrange free statutory removal service for customers who purchase a new item of REE. This service aims at facilitating members of the public to properly recycle the REE that they intend to abandon. The REE sellers must also provide consumers with the corresponding recycling label alongside the sold REE and a receipt showing the prescribed wording on the recycling levies, which serve to show that the purchased REE is distributed under the WPRS. The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has asked the operator of the Government's WEEE Treatment and Recycling Facility (WEEE€\$PARK) to fully gear up and provide additional manpower to attain its performance pledge for collecting the waste equipment three working days after receipt of the service request from the sellers. The EPD will continue to closely monitor the operation of the operator, and if situation warrants, ask the operator to adjust its logistics fleet and manpower to meet the service demand of sellers and consumers. If the date on which the consumer and seller agree to arrange the delivery of a new item and the removal of an item of waste equipment is three working days after the date of purchase, no extra fee should be payable to the seller.

Mr Wong said, "The operation of the new scheme is generally smooth. We appreciate that during the early stage of implementation, it may take time for members of the public and the trade to get accustomed to the new arrangements and the operational flow. The EPD will meet with representatives of the trade in due course to review the implementation details of the scheme and consider if there is any room for improvement. Meanwhile, if we have identified any non-compliance with the legal requirements on the part of the sellers or its staff, such as providing misleading information to the consumers in respect of the time required for arranging the statutory removal service, the EPD will follow up with investigation and take necessary enforcement actions."

As at July 31, 2018 immediately before the commencement of the law, the EPD had received 2 562 applications for endorsement of removal service plans (RSP) by REE sellers, of which 1 754 had been approved. In parallel, 219 applications had been received for registration as suppliers, of which 173 had been approved. Those cases that are still being processed were only received in the preceding week: most of RSP endorsement applications are made by small-scale computer sellers and small works contractors involved in the installation and dismantling of air-conditioners; whereas most of the applications for registration as suppliers are made by small-scale computer suppliers. The EPD will complete processing these applications as soon as possible.

With commencement of the legislation, the EPD has commenced its enforcement efforts including inspections at shops suspected of breaching the law and which have not submitted applications. If members of the public have any questions or complaints on the implementation arrangement of the WPRS, they can call the EPD's dedicated hotline 2310 0223.

In addition, to protect the environment, the Government urges members of the public to make good use of the statutory removal service to ensure collection of the waste equipment for proper recycling and turning them into resources. If a member of the public needs to dispose of a waste equipment and is not purchasing a new REE, he or she may call the recycling hotline 2676 8888 to make an appointment for free collection service. Please however note that the schedule of appointment may take longer as the WEEE&PARK operator will accord higher priority to collection requests for statutory removal service.

Since its initial operation in October 2017 and full commissioning in March 2018, the WEEE&PARK has processed a total of 4 500 tonnes of WEEE cumulatively. With the implementation of the WPRS, we believe the amount of WEEE processed by the WEEE&PARK will increase progressively, helping to ensure that WEEE generated locally are properly recycled and turned into resources.

