

Suspected leakage of wastewater from WENT Landfill

In response to the recent incident of a suspected leakage of wastewater from West New Territories (WENT) Landfill, a spokesman for the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) today (September 7) provided the following details on the latest progress of the follow-up work.

EPD staff stationed at WENT Landfill conducted an inspection in early August and found that there was suspicious wastewater discharge from the landfill. After investigation, it was confirmed that the leakage concerned involved two adjacent sources. The first leakage was attributed to the valve for a rainwater collection facility at the landfill, which was not closed properly. The second leakage came from an abandoned gas pipe from the landfill situated close to the first source. The wastewater from these two sources merged together and then discharged into the Tai Shui Hang River via a tributary.

The EPD attaches great importance to the management and supervision of facilities operated by contractors. The Department had already issued a stern warning to the contractor concerned and instructed it to conduct a thorough investigation and to rectify the problems promptly. The contractor had already deactivated the valve of the rainwater collection facility on August 7 and connected the gas pipe concerned to the leachate management system of the landfill to ensure that the wastewater would not accidentally contaminate nearby waters. The Department also convened two meetings with the contractor's management team on the incident. The contractor agreed to conduct a thorough inspection of similar facilities and pipes to ensure that such incidents will not occur again. The Department is still conducting an investigation into the specific causes and processes of the leakage of wastewater from the landfill and has urged the contractor to co-operate in the investigation and supplement relevant information. If violation of any contract term is found, it will be dealt with according to the contract.

Before the contractor had rectified the aforementioned problem, the Environmental Compliance Division of the EPD conducted a blitz investigation at the landfill on August 7. Wastewater samples were taken and sent to the Government Laboratory for analysis. The results showed that a wastewater sample from the concerned abandoned gas pipe at the landfill was suspected to have breached the Water Pollution Control Ordinance (WPCO). The EPD is now conducting further investigation and collecting evidence on the case. If there is sufficient evidence, the EPD will initiate prosecution against the contractor in accordance with the WPCO. The Department is not in a position to disclose further information at this stage as the investigation is still underway.

Since the incident, the EPD has stepped up the monitoring of water quality of the water bodies (including Tai Shui Hang River) surrounding WENT

Landfill. The Department will increase the routine sampling frequency (especially during the rainy seasons). It also plans shortly to engage academics to conduct an independent assessment of the water quality of Tai Shui Hang River.

The EPD collected water samples twice from various parts of Tai Shui Hang River in the last week of August. The analysis results showed that there have been no significant signs of pollution to the water quality of Deep Bay or Tai Shui Hang River. The EPD will continue to monitor the water quality of Tai Shui Hang River and Deep Bay.