

Waste statistics for 2017 published

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) today (December 27) published the report "Monitoring of Solid Waste in Hong Kong – Waste Statistics for 2017", presenting the 2017 statistics on disposal and recovery/recycling of solid waste generated in Hong Kong, which includes municipal solid waste (MSW) (comprising domestic, commercial and industrial waste), overall construction waste and special waste.

Overall, the quantity of MSW generated in 2017 was 5.75 million tonnes, an annual increase of 0.9 per cent. Domestic MSW generation dropped by 1.9 per cent, suggesting that members of the public have gradually become more aware of reduction of waste at source. Commercial and industrial MSW generation continued to rise, with an annual increase of 4.1 per cent.

In 2017, the average daily quantity of solid waste disposed of at landfills was 15 516 tonnes, representing an increase of 1.2 per cent compared with 2016. Regarding MSW, the average daily quantity of disposal at landfills was 10 733 tonnes in 2017, representing an increase of 3.7 per cent compared with 2016.

As far as the per capita MSW disposal rate per day is concerned, the 2017 figure was 1.45 kilograms, up from 1.41kg in 2016. The increase in the MSW disposal rate was partly caused by an increase in the amount of commercial and industrial waste being disposed of, which was partly attributable to a vibrant local economy in 2017.

Looking at the figures by waste type, non-ferrous metals and glass disposal dropped by 16 per cent and 12 per cent respectively. However, paper disposal increased by 13 per cent and food waste disposal rose by 1.7 per cent.

Regarding special waste, following the commencement of the Sludge Treatment Facility (T · PARK) in Tuen Mun in April 2015 to treat dewatered sewage sludge from major sewage treatment works managed by the Drainage Services Department, the disposal quantity of dewatered sludge has recorded a cumulative reduction of 88 per cent compared with 2014. However, due to the increase in dewatered sludge originating from other sources, the quantity of special waste being disposed of at landfills in 2017 increased by 1.9 per cent compared with 2016.

Regarding construction waste, the recovery rate of inert construction materials delivered to public fill reception facilities and other outlets remained at a high level of 92 per cent in 2017. The disposal of overall construction waste at landfills registered a decrease of 4.9 per cent compared with 2016. It could be partly attributable to the increase in construction waste disposal charges effective from April 2017 to ensure that the charge can create sufficient incentive for the trade to reduce and reuse construction and demolition materials and reduce disposal.

Hong Kong relies heavily on service industries, and hence has very limited capacity to utilise raw or recycled materials in local production. The value of and outlets for local recyclables have long been dictated by the condition of the market outside Hong Kong. The challenging condition of the market outside Hong Kong for recyclables that has persisted in recent years, together with stricter import controls imposed by nearby jurisdictions, has continued to affect the overall performance of the recycling industry. The MSW recovery rate was 32 per cent in 2017, lower than the 34 per cent of 2016. However, the voluntary glass bottle recycling programme funded by the Environment and Conservation Fund has led to an 18.4 per cent increase in the recovery of waste glass in 2017 compared to 2016.

An EPD spokesman said that the Government will continue to work at full steam in implementing the "Hong Kong: Blueprint for Sustainable Use of Resources 2013-2022". In her Policy Address announced in October this year, the Chief Executive emphasised that the implementation of MSW charging is central to the Government's overall waste reduction strategy. MSW charging will provide the necessary financial incentives to drive behavioural and cultural changes, and to encourage different sectors of the community to proactively practise waste reduction at source and clean recycling, thus reducing overall waste disposal. In Seoul and Taipei City, waste disposal dropped by some 30 per cent in the initial period after quantity-based waste charging was introduced. This demonstrates that a charging scheme can reduce waste effectively. The Government introduced the amendment bill into the Legislative Council (LegCo) for scrutiny in November 2018. After passage of the legislation, there will be a preparatory period of about 12 to 18 months to allow the Government, stakeholders and the public to prepare for the implementation of MSW charging.

The EPD will continue to implement various policies to promote waste reduction, including implementing the two producer responsibility schemes (PRs) on waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) and glass beverage containers. Regarding food waste, the largest component in MSW, the Organic Resources Recovery Centre Phase 1 (O · Park 1), which can process up to 200 tonnes of food waste per day, commenced operation in July 2018. The Organic Resources Recovery Centre Phase 2, which can process up to 300 tonnes of food waste per day, will commence operation in 2022, subject to the progress of funding approval by LegCo. Furthermore, the EPD has been planning to gradually implement "Food Waste – Sewage Sludge Anaerobic Co-digestion" at existing and future Sewage Treatment Works, with a view to raising the total food waste recycling quantity as soon as possible. The EPD will also roll out a free collection service for food waste initially from commercial and industrial sources on a pilot basis.

The EPD is actively supporting the development of the local waste paper recycling industry to reduce the reliance on export to dispose of local waste paper. The EPD recently awarded a lease for four adjacent lots in EcoPark to develop a local waste paper recycling and manufacturing plant capable of processing about 300 000 tonnes a year. The plant will commence design and construction in 2019 and is planned to commence operation around 2022. The EPD is also actively working with other bureaux and departments to identify

suitable long-term and short-term sites for developing more recycling facilities to support local recycling activities. The Government will continue to support the recycling industry through various Recycling Fund programmes, and to strengthen the promotion of a "clean recycling" culture in order to enhance the quality, as well as the competitiveness of local waste paper in the export market.

The Policy Address also announced that various actions will be taken to tackle the challenges of waste plastic. Among others, the Government will press ahead with the introduction of the PRS on plastic beverage containers, review the operation of the plastic shopping bag charging scheme and roll out a free collection service for waste plastics from non-commercial and non-industrial sources on a pilot basis. Furthermore, the EPD will carry out a consultancy study in 2018/19 to study the feasibility of introducing regulatory control on the use of disposable plastic tableware in future, as well as the relevant mainstream proposals. Meanwhile, the Government will take the lead in reducing the use of disposable plastic tableware at canteens and restaurants in government venues.

The report and "Hong Kong 2017 Municipal Solid Waste – At a Glance" are both available in electronic format and can be obtained from the EPD website at www.wastereduction.gov.hk/en/assistancewizard/waste_red_sat.htm.