

Waste statistics for 2020 published

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) today (December 10) published the report "Monitoring of Solid Waste in Hong Kong – Waste Statistics for 2020". It presents the 2020 statistics on disposal and recovery/recycling of solid waste generated in Hong Kong, including municipal solid waste (MSW) (covering both domestic waste and commercial and industrial waste), overall construction waste and special waste.

The total quantity of solid waste disposed of at landfills was 5.39 million tonnes in 2020 and the average daily quantity was 14 739 tonnes, representing a decrease of 5.7 per cent as compared to 2019. Regarding MSW, the total quantity of disposal at landfills was 3.96 million tonnes in 2020 and the average daily quantity was 10 809 tonnes, representing a decline of 2.2 per cent from 2019. As far as the per capita MSW disposal rate per day is concerned, the 2020 figure was 1.44 kilograms, down from 1.47 kilograms in 2019.

Food waste was still the largest component of MSW in 2020, accounting for 30 per cent, followed by waste paper (24 per cent) and waste plastics (21 per cent). These shares are comparable to those in 2019.

The quantity of MSW recovered for local recycling was about 230 000 tonnes in 2020, representing an increase of about 11 per cent compared to about 200 000 tonnes in 2019. With the EPD progressively launching the Plastic Recycling Pilot Scheme, and expanding the Pilot Scheme on Food Waste Collection and the community recycling network, the quantities of locally recycled plastic and food waste increased by about 27 per cent and 19 per cent respectively. Taking into account plastics recovered for local recycling and those delivered outside Hong Kong for recycling, the overall quantity of plastics recovered rose by about 32 per cent. However, the quantity of waste glass (mainly glass containers) recovered for local recycling dropped by about 34 per cent, which was likely mainly attributed to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on bars and the catering industry.

While the quantity of MSW recovered for local recycling continued to rise, the quantity delivered outside Hong Kong for recycling dropped from about 1.44 million tonnes in 2019 to about 1.31 million tonnes in 2020. The change reflects the persistent challenging condition of the market outside Hong Kong for recyclables and the increasing impact of stricter import controls imposed by nearby jurisdictions.

Regarding construction waste, although the quantity of waste generation (the sum of disposal and reuse) in 2020 increased by about 17 per cent as compared with the 2019 level, the quantity transferred for direct reuse registered an increase of about 48 per cent and the amount delivered to public fill reception facilities rose by about 8 per cent. The quantity disposed of at landfills decreased by about 13 per cent. The recovery rate of construction materials rose from 92 per cent in 2019 to 94 per cent in 2020.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the methodology of the statistical surveys. For the year of 2020, taking into account the pandemic situation and staff safety, no manual waste composition survey by taking samples at waste treatment facilities was conducted. Normally, statistics on the composition of waste disposal are compiled from data collected from various sources, including the aforementioned manual sampling survey and other statistical surveys, to collect data on the disposal quantity of various components of MSW.

An EPD spokesman said that the Government will work at full steam to implement various waste reduction and recycling measures in the Waste Blueprint for Hong Kong 2035 to achieve the vision of "Waste Reduction–Resources Circulation–Zero Landfill". Regarding waste reduction and recovery, the EPD will expand the community recycling network rebranded last year as GREEN@COMMUNITY and strengthen central collection services for low-value recyclables having regard to the latest operation of the private recycling market in order to further encourage community participation in waste reduction and recycling. The EPD will continue to implement various policies, including various producer responsibility schemes, to promote resource circulation. Meanwhile, the EPD is actively preparing for the implementation of MSW charging.

The report and "Hong Kong 2020 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.