

Customs and Excise Department (C&ED)
Environmental Report 2005

Customs & Excise Department (the Department) is the Government's enforcement agency responsible for the following areas of work –

- (a) to protect the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) against smuggling;
- (b) to protect and collect revenue on dutiable goods;
- (c) to detect and deter narcotics trafficking and abuse of narcotic drugs;
- (d) to protect intellectual property rights;
- (e) to protect consumer interests;
- (f) to protect and facilitate legitimate trade and industry and to uphold Hong Kong's trading integrity; and
- (g) to fulfil international obligations.

2. As at 31 December 2005, the Department had an establishment of 4 939, with the staff members accommodated in over 30 different office locations in the territory.

Department's Environmental Policy

3. The Department is committed to ensuring that all our operations are conducted in an environmentally responsible manner. We have put in place appropriate measures and shall continue to devote our efforts to –

- (a) strengthen the environmental awareness among our staff so that each individual staff member can contribute towards the minimization of consumption of resources (including material, fuel and energy) and promotion of waste reduction, recovery and recycling;
- (b) dispose of seizures in accordance with the best practices for the disposal of solid and liquid wastes;
- (c) contain the emission of pollutants from our vehicular and launch fleets within the regulatory standards stipulated under various legislations; and

- (d) promote the use of environmental friendly products.

Environmental Performance

4. The Department's enforcement operations against the supply, sale and use of illicit fuel in motor vehicles under the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance (Cap. 109) has, in effect, helped reduce air pollution and complement the enforcement of the Air Pollution Control (Motor Vehicle Fuel) Regulation⁽¹⁾. In 2005, we have cracked down 22 marked oil detreating plants, 1,085 illegal fuel filling stations, and seized about 1,173,202 litres of illicit fuel and prevented them from getting into the black market. During the year, we also conducted a territory-wide operation 'Grand Rooster' to check motor vehicles and detected 266 cases of vehicles using illicit fuel. In addition, we mounted 47 joint operations with the concerned Government departments, namely the Police, Fire Services Department, Transport Department, Lands Department and Environmental Protection Department (EPD), aiming at neutralizing illicit fuel activities at various levels.

5. We will continue to co-operate with and support the EPD in the control of the import and export of waste, and fulfill our obligations in the control of the import of asbestos, ozone depleting substances (ODS), radioactive substances and other chemicals which are known to be harmful to the environment, under various legislations. The Department will also take part in an new import and export monitoring mechanism titled "The Project Sky Hole Patching" to be initiated by the China Customs in late 2006 to combat illegal trade of ODS in the Asia Pacific Region.

6. Below is a snapshot of the specific environmental measures undertaken by the Department in the period under review –

PAPERLESS TRADE: The second phase of Electronic System for Cargo Manifests (EMAN2) system jointly developed by the Trade & Industry

⁽¹⁾ To protect air quality, the Air Pollution Control (Motor Vehicle Fuel) Regulation, which is enforced by EPD, stipulates that the fuel used in motor vehicles should contain no more than 0.005% by weight of sulphur (0.035% before the amendment of the Regulation which came into effect on 1 April 2002). As illicit fuel normally has sulphur content higher than the stipulated level, our enforcement operations to suppress the supply and use of illicit fuel in motor vehicles thus has an effect of complementing the enforcement of the Regulation.

Department, the Census & Statistics Department and the Department was rolled out in two stages in April and November 2005. Following the implementation of EMAN2, the electronic submission of cargo manifests by ocean and river carriers has become mandatory in June 2006. Since its first launch in 2003, the EMAN system has effectively served as a one-stop channel for the carriers to submit electronic manifests in respect of cargo transported by rail, ocean, river and air, which then disseminated the manifest data received to different government departments for various purposes, thus reducing paper consumption by both the commercial and the government sectors.

DISPOSAL OF SEIZED BATTERY: The Department has taken the lead in participating in the “Rechargeable Battery Recycling Programme”. The Programme, organized by a tripartite working group consisting of EPD, conservation groups and the battery trade, was aimed at minimizing the damage to the environment possibly caused by disposal of harmful materials and to conserve valuable natural resources. Starting from September 2006, rechargeable batteries seized by the Department have been sent to EPD, which would ship them to an overseas country for recycling by designated treatment plant. This has replaced the previous practice of disposing the seized batteries by landfill.

COMPUTERIZATION OF WORKFLOW: With the implementation of the Accessibility Programme of the Government Office Automation (GOA) Programme and the Departmental Portal respectively in 2003 and 2004, there has been an increased use in emails communication as well as the electronic services provided through GOA and Departmental Portal in 2005, thus further reducing the paper consumption by staff members in performing their daily work.

REDUCING EMISSION OF POLLUTANTS: All Customs Launches and departmental vehicles have been using unleaded petrol and ultra low sulphur diesels to minimize pollutant emissions. The Department will continue to strictly adopt such policy for its vehicle and vessel fleets.

THE 25.5°C INITIATIVE: Pursuant to this government-wide initiative, all premises occupied by the Department, except those of special operational

requirements like computer server rooms, dog kennels and specialized equipment rooms, have had the thermostats set at 25.5°C. This has significantly reduced the electricity consumption on air-conditioning.

GREEN HOUSEKEEPING: Commendable efforts have been made by staff members in the implementation of green housekeeping measures for reducing the consumption of resources and promote waste reduction, recovery and recycling in the workplace. Additional practical guidelines have been promulgated from time to time to encourage and sustain their momentum for performing their duties in an environmental friendly manner.

Closing Remarks

7. Over the past few years, the Department has strengthened the environmental awareness among its staff and received much greater support from them than before on our environmental protection efforts. We shall continue to build on this foundation an even more solid ground to further improve our environmental performance.

Customs & Excise Department
November 2006