

Customs and Excise Department

Controlling Officer's Environmental Report 2008

Preface

The Customs and Excise Department (C&ED) is a progressive and forward-looking Customs organization. As a law enforcement department, C&ED is responsible for a number of important law enforcement functions including anti-smuggling, detection and deterrence of drug trafficking, protection of intellectual property rights, exercise of trade controls duties, safeguarding of consumer interests, as well as collection and protection of public revenue on dutiable goods.

In discharging the Department's role as a law enforcement agency, we are mindful of our responsibilities to support the sustainable development of Hong Kong and are committed to ensuring the efficient use of resources. We also place emphasis on the customs enforcement and operations which will enhance the broader environmental quality well beyond the boundary of Hong Kong.

On the other hand, C&ED continues to achieve improvements in many aspects of in-house environmental performance on various areas like paper reduction, use of recycled paper, energy consumption, carbon audit on a pilot building, and use of plastic waste bags with degradable / recycled materials. In the coming years we will remain focused on measures which will lessen the Department's environmental impact.

Customs Enforcement and Operations for a Greener Planet

We are conscious of the need to deliver our services and conduct our operations in an environmentally friendly and responsible manner to demonstrate our green credentials. Appropriate environmental measures have been put in place in our operations for the betterment of the environment.

- **Commitment to the Ozone Layer Protection**

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Customs Organization Regional Intelligence Liaison Office for Asia and the Pacific (RILO A/P) jointly launched the Project

Sky Hole Patching in 2006¹ to combat illegal trade of ozone depleting substances (ODS) in the Asia Pacific Region. Although the Project was concluded on 1 November 2007, the notification mechanism as well as the cooperation amongst the Department, overseas Customs authorities and environmental agencies has been maintained.

In 2008, the Department checked 182 ODS licenses and no irregularities were identified. The Department is committed to curbing illegal trade in ODS and will continue to report suspicious shipments and seizures of ODS to the RILO A/P through the established network.

- **Commitment to Clean Air**

Since mid-June 2005, the Department has conducted a territory-wide operation code-named Operation “Grand Rooster” to check the fuel tanks of heavy vehicles. In addition, the Department mounted 93 joint operations with the Government departments concerned, namely the Hong Kong Police Force, Fire Services Department, Transport Department and the Environmental Protection Department (EPD), aiming at neutralizing illicit fuel activities at various levels. These operations brought about a strong deterrent effect.

The Department continued the stringent enforcement action against the use of industrial diesel with high sulphur content by motor vehicles². In 2008, the Department had checked 7 391 motor vehicles, 19 of them were found using illicit fuel. The percentage of vehicles found using illicit fuel out of the vehicles being checked maintained at a very low level of 0.26% in 2008.

¹ Phase I of the Project was rolled out on 1 September 2006, in which a monitoring and notification mechanism on suspicious shipments of ODS was established. Phase II was kicked-off on 1 March 2007 to include hazardous waste in the Project.

² The Department’s enforcement operations against the supply, sale and use of illicit fuel in motor vehicles under the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance, Cap. 109 have, in effect, helped reduce air pollution and complement the enforcement of the Air Pollution Control (Motor Vehicle Fuel) Regulation.

- **Commitment to Cracking Down on Illegal Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes**

The Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal is a global environmental agreement on hazardous and other wastes which is applicable to Hong Kong. To halt the illegal transboundary movements of hazardous wastes in Hong Kong, the Department has joined hands with EPD in running a “Strategic Control Scheme on Hazardous Waste” since 4 July 2007. The key feature of the Scheme is to detect and return shipment of hazardous wastes to the exporting countries under the Basel Convention.

In 2008, EPD, with the strong support of the Department, intercepted 136 containers of hazardous waste and successfully returned 135 of them to the exporting countries. This illustrates that the Scheme is highly effective in guarding Hong Kong against hazardous wastes.

Moreover, 106 pieces of seizure information on hazardous waste shipments were relayed to the UNEP, the RILO A/P and overseas counterparts for intelligence sharing and risk profiling purposes. The Department will continue to report suspicious shipments and seizures of hazardous wastes to the RILO A/P.

- **Commitment to Combating Illegal Trade of Hazardous Chemicals**

To support the control on international trade of hazardous chemicals, the Department has been working closely with EPD since the enactment of the Hazardous Chemicals Control Ordinance³. The Department is responsible for guarding against illegal import and export of hazardous chemicals at entry and exit points, and conducting post-shipment investigations into suspected violation of licensing requirements detected in-town at EPD’s

³ The Hazardous Chemicals Control Ordinance (Cap. 595) was enacted in 2007. After its full implementation in July 2008, the import and export of hazardous chemicals are subject to licensing control under the Import and Export (General) Regulations, Cap. 60A.

requests under the Import and Export (General) Regulations.

Green Customs

- **Recycle of Rechargeable Battery**

In order to minimize the possible damage to the environment caused by the disposal of harmful materials and to conserve valuable natural resources, the Department has continued to put in efforts on the “Rechargeable Battery Recycling Programme” jointly organized by a tripartite working group consisting of EPD, conservation groups and the battery trade. In 2008, a total number of 36 044 (approx. 830 kg) rechargeable batteries seized by the Department were transported overseas for recycling.

- **Promoting Paperless Trade**

The Electronic System for Cargo Manifests allows electronic submission of manifests, so that air, ocean, river and rail mode carriers are able to submit manifests to the Census and Statistics Department, the Trade and Industry Department and C&ED in one go. It serves as a one-stop channel for carriers to submit manifests electronically which has replaced the traditional paper-mode submission, thereby reducing paper consumption by both the commercial and government sectors.

- **Paper Reduction**

With the continuous contributions and efforts of our staff on various green housekeeping measures as well as the ongoing implementation of the Government Office Automation Programme and the Departmental Portal, paper consumption had been reduced from 44 345 reams in 2007 to 39 918 reams in 2008.

- **Use of Recycled Paper**

The Department promotes the use of recycled paper and with our continuous effort, the result is encouraging. In 2008, around 52% of the total paper demand of the Department was met by

recycled paper.

- **Use of Plastic Waste Bags with Degradable / Recycled Materials**

The cleansing contractors of the Department have been required to use plastic waste bags with degradable / recycled materials for the cleaning work of the Department's premises. Such provision has been included in the contract as one of our green tender requirements. Apart from using environmentally friendly plastic waste bags, the Department continues to remind the contractors that the use of plastic waste bags should be kept to the minimum.

- **Training and Publicity amongst Staff and Green Housekeeping Measures**

Through promotional and educational programmes, the Department aims at ensuring that all staff members are aware of their environmental responsibilities. The Department has implemented a series of green housekeeping measures, targeting at minimization of resource consumption, waste recovery and energy conservation, and has closely monitored their effectiveness. Departmental guidelines are reviewed and re-circulated regularly to promote the concepts of green management. The Department also coordinates and encourages its staff to participate in environmental activities like the "Community Chest Green Day" and the Friends of the Earth's "One-Hour-long Lights Out on the Summer Solstice" with a view to instilling environmental awareness into them. Besides, staff members are also encouraged to make suggestions on green initiatives and the Department is always receptive to their ideas.

Green Buildings

- **Rein in the Electricity Consumption**

The Department had experienced another year of expansion in 2008. The establishment was increased from 5 598 as at end

2007 to 5 639 as at end 2008. During the year⁴, an additional area of about 748 m² being office space at DHL Central Asia Hub at the Hong Kong International Airport and the Murray Road Multistorey Carpark Building was allocated to the Department to meet the Customs clearance requirement consequent to the expansion of DHL Central Asia Hub at the Airport and the need of supporting services of the Department.

Nevertheless, with the concerted efforts of our staff, we had not only managed to limit the impact of the increasing service needs, but also achieved a mild saving (about 2%) of the overall electricity consumption for our non-joint-user premises in 2008.

- **Carbon Audit on Buildings Scheme**

In support of the Government's commitment on reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, the Department has taken part in the carbon audit on buildings scheme and has selected the Kwai Chung Customhouse (KCCH) as a pilot building. The net emissions of KCCH for 2008 are 3 136 in tonnes of carbon dioxide-equivalent, or 0.14 in tonnes of carbon dioxide-equivalent per square meter.

Green Initiatives

- **Going Green on Manifests**

At present most of the manifests (98%) are received in paper form. Only a minority of the shippers opt to submit manifest through the electronic platform. Since mid-2008, the Ports and Maritime Command (PMC) has been carrying out an outreach programme to promote the paperless trade. Our officers visit many shipping companies to introduce and promote the submission of manifest on seaborne cargo by electronic means. Through the outreach programme, it is anticipated that more and more shippers will submit electronic manifests to the Department and the percentage is expected to reach around 39% of the manifests.

⁴ A total land space of 35 050 m² at the former Kai Tak Airport previously allocated to the Department was returned to Government Property Agency in 2008.

In addition, under the outreach programme, PMC also encourages the shippers to use email rather than the fax as the mode of communication, hence less paper will be consumed. Moreover, upon completion of the enhancement of Customs Control System (CCS) and Electronic System for Cargo Manifest in 2009, the printing of detention notices and release vouchers will be computerized. A total of 35 700 number of preprinted departmental forms is expected to be saved eventually per year.

- **Green New Headquarters**

The Customs Headquarters Building under construction is scheduled for commissioning in late 2010. In the planning stage we have actively worked with the Architectural Services Department and Electrical and Mechanical Services Department in devising various environmentally friendly and energy efficient measures.

We will adopt zero ozone depleting refrigerant for the chiller units, install occupancy sensors (lighting and air-conditioning units will be switched off when no occupant is detected in the office), and build photovoltaic panels on the Building. We will also adopt green measures such as water-cooled air conditioning system (which uses less energy to provide a given amount of cooling), lamp with high-efficacy, and green roof (which reduces cooling costs due to increased building insulation).

We will keep up with our efforts and cooperation with relevant departments in overseeing the successful implementation of the various green measures for the project.

Conclusion

We will sustain our efforts to explore and implement new green housekeeping measures. We will also continue to promote environmental awareness among our staff, and to encourage their contribution and participation in related activities. With our concerted efforts, we are looking forward to further improving our environmental performance.

Comments and Suggestions

This report can be viewed at our homepage at www.customs.gov.hk. Comments and suggestions on the report are most welcome. Please write to our Green Manager at Customs and Excise Department, 8/F, Harbour Building, 38 Pier Road, Central, Hong Kong or email us at customsenquiry@customs.gov.hk.

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