

Customs and Excise Department

Controlling Officer's Environmental Report 2009

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, 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 2009, the Department checked 133 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 70 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, thereby preventing the use of illicit fuel with high pollutant emissions by the vehicles.

- **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.

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.

In 2009, EPD, with the strong support of the Department, intercepted 61 containers of hazardous waste and successfully returned all of them to the exporting countries. This illustrates that the Scheme is highly effective in guarding Hong Kong against hazardous wastes.

Moreover, 52 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.

Between March to May 2009, the Department also participated in a 50-day joint operation codenamed "DEMETER". It was led by the World Customs Organization with a view to combating illegal transboundary movement of waste at sea between Europe, Asia-Pacific and Africa. Acting on the information provided by the Customs Administrations in Europe, the Department examined 26 suspicious waste containers and no irregularities were detected.

- **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 Ordinance². 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 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

² 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.

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 2009, a total number of 67 950 (approx. 1 780 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 39 918 reams in 2008 to 37 138 reams in 2009, representing a decrease of 7%.

Separately, the Department promotes the use of recycled paper which accounted for about 46% of the paper consumption in 2009.

- **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. Moreover, specially designed excrement-collecting bags, which are made of biodegradable materials,

are used instead of plastic bags for Customs detector dogs working outdoor, so that the number of plastic bags used can be further reduced.

- **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”, the World Wide Fund for Nature’s “Earth Hour” 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. To raise staff’s awareness and sustain their momentums on practising various green measures, staff are also encouraged to attend seminars and briefing sessions on energy-saving measures and to exchange experience with other organizations in the public and private sectors. Besides, staff members are welcome to make suggestions on green initiatives and the Department is always receptive to their ideas.

Green Buildings

- **Rein in the Electricity Consumption**

During the year, an additional area of about 379 m² being office space at Aircraft Recovery Equipment Store at the Hong Kong International Airport and the Murray Road Multistorey Carpark Building was allocated to the Department to meet the operational requirements of establishing a new dog base at the Airport and the office accommodation shortfall of the Department. The expansion of Customs Examination Hall at the Airport equipped with additional electronic equipment and devices, the setting up of a new office at Kwai Chung Customhouse for the implementation of Road Cargo System and enhanced enforcement

activities during the 2009 East Asian Games had all given rise to an increasing demand for electricity.

While we continued to implement various housekeeping measures for energy saving, the Department has taken an additional initiative to switch off all decorative external lighting of our premises before 11p.m., unless there are special operational, security or technical considerations, to further reduce our electricity consumption. We had also requested Electrical and Mechanical Services Department to regularly check the components of the air-conditioning systems and chiller plants to ensure their efficient operation. All worn-out parts would be replaced to prevent wastage of electricity. With the concerted efforts of our staff, we had managed to contain the impact of the overwhelming increasing service needs on the overall electricity consumption in our non-joint-user premises and there was a mild increase of about 4% in 2009. It remains our target to control the increase of electricity consumption in 2010.

- **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 in 2008. The net emissions of KCCH for 2009 are 1 525 in tonnes of carbon dioxide-equivalent, or 0.069 in tonnes of carbon dioxide-equivalent per square meter.

Green Initiatives

- **Going Green on Manifests**

Since mid-2008, the Ports and Maritime Command (PMC) has been carrying out an outreach programme on the "EMAN Statement 1 Submission Scheme" to promote the electronic submission of pre-arrival seaborne cargo manifest. A discussion forum was held in January 2009 to publicize the scheme. During the preliminary stage, the percentage of manifest submitted through electronic means was increased almost threefold from less than 2% as at the end of 2008 to about 7% as at the end of 2009.

Through the outreach programme, our officers visited many shipping companies to introduce and promote the paperless trade. They understand the benefits that will come along with the new scheme. It is anticipated that more and more shippers will submit electronic manifest to the Department. The percentage is expected to go up to about 90% of the inbound seaborne manifest by the end of 2010, meaning that the shipping companies can save a total of 1 753 300 number of paper in printing manifests to the Customs per year.

Furthermore, in order to streamline the manifest processing, protect data security and accelerate information exchange among cargo selectors, we are planning to implement paperless cargo selection mode in late 2010. We will internally share information via secured departmental network and perform cargo selection workflow through computer software. The aim is to achieve more with less. By using the digital forms, we can, not only save time, ensure high accuracy but also achieve a paper saving of 350 600 number for the Department per year.

On the other hand, the enhancement of Customs Control System (CCS) and Electronic System for Cargo Manifest has been completed in February 2009. The printing of 24 types of working reports, detention notice, release voucher and correspondences are now computerized in CCS, resulting a saving of 35 700 number of preprinted departmental forms for the department 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), build photovoltaic panels on the Building and install vehicle battery charging facilities in

designated parking spaces in the Building to promote the use of electric vehicles. 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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