

Customs and Excise Department Controlling Officer's Environmental Report 2020

Preface

The Customs and Excise Department (the Department) is a progressive and dynamic law enforcement agency responsible for anti-smuggling, interdiction of drug trafficking, intellectual property rights protection, trade facilitation, import and export control, safeguarding consumer rights as well as collection of excise on dutiable goods.

In discharging its statutory role, the Department strives to promote sustainable development and is committed to making the best use of available resources.

Services and Operations Conducive to Greening

We consider it necessary to be environmentally responsible in delivering our services and operations, and are actively participating in the following international and community-wide environmental programmes:

- *Ozone Layer Protection*

The Department took part in “Project Sky-Hole-Patching” jointly launched in 2006 by the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Customs Organisation Regional Intelligence Liaison Office for Asia and the Pacific (RILO A/P) to combat illegal trading activities connected with Ozone Depleting Substances (ODS). It has been extended to cover the hazardous waste and operated as a routine project since 2007. In 2020, we performed checking on 41 related licences.

- *Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Waste*

To fulfill international obligations arising from the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, we continued to work with the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) on implementation of the “Strategic Control Scheme on Hazardous Waste”. In this regard, 47 containers were returned to

the relevant exporting countries while 74 pieces of seizure information were relayed to RILO A/P and overseas counterparts for follow-up action in 2020.

- *Recycling of Rechargeable Batteries*

To minimise pollution caused by improper disposal of harmful materials and conserve natural resources, we also joined the “Rechargeable Battery Recycling Programme” conceived by EPD, conservation groups and battery traders, under which 42 700 seized rechargeable batteries were sent abroad for recycling in 2020.

- *Controlling the Releases on Import and Export of Mercury*

To fulfil the obligations under the Minamata Convention on Mercury, which aims to protect human health and the environment from anthropogenic emissions and release of mercury and mercury compounds, the Department has assumed the responsibility to detect illegal import or export of pure mercury at entry/exits points since 1 November 2020.

Green Approach to Facilitate Trade Activities

We have adopted a green approach to improve our services and developed the following systems to facilitate trading activities:

- *Electronic System for Cargo Manifests (EMAN)*

EMAN enables a one-stop electronic submission of manifests by air freight, marine cargo and river trade carriers. As at the end of 2020, over 83.6% of inbound marine cargo pre-arrival information was submitted through the “EMAN Statement I Submission Scheme” and 194 major forwarders had joined the “e-Sea Customs Clearance Scheme”. Continued efforts will be made by our officers to induce users to submit manifests electronically.

- Money Service Operators Licensing System (MSOS)

MSOS was implemented in 2012 to process on-line submission of licence applications, regular returns and public enquiries. The system not only reduces paper consumption, but also mitigates environmental impact of errands run by Money Service Operators (MSOs) when submitting paper-based applications and returns. The Department has recorded a significant increase in the number of on-line submissions over the past few years and will continue to encourage the use of electronic means in lieu of paper by MSOs.

- Dutiable Commodities System (DCS)

The e-Licence website of DCS was launched in January 2017 for the electronic application of dutiable commodity licences. Since 27 July 2017, all licence applications have been required to be submitted electronically through the DCS. The DCS has also supported electronic submission of Application for Ships' Stores since 16 March 2020. The initiatives have helped achieve better efficiency and reduction of paper consumption.

- Smart Hydrocarbon Oil Management (SHOM)

The initiative of SHOM was initiated in October 2020 and scheduled for full implementation by September 2021. Under the SHOM, hydrocarbon oil companies can submit sales return electronically through a newly designated electronic platform, so as to achieve a paperless and more environmental-friendly business approach by reducing the printing of documents in hard copies for duties calculation and auditing.

Green Office Environment

We make every effort to cultivate a green office environment through the following measures:

- Headquarters Building

The Customs Headquarters Building (CHB) contains a diverse array of environmentally-friendly and energy-efficient installations including zero ozone depleting refrigerant for chiller units, occupancy sensors for lighting and air-conditioning as well as photovoltaic panels and vehicle battery charging facilities. Meanwhile, water-cooled air conditioning system, high-efficacy illuminating devices and podium gardens are deployed to speed up heat dissipation.

- Housekeeping Measures and Staff Training

We monitor closely the outcome of different housekeeping measures aimed at minimising wastage, encouraging recycling and promoting energy conservation. In addition, we regularly update and re-circulate guidelines to alert colleagues on their environmental responsibilities, support events hosted by conservation groups and organise seminars to exchange experience with relevant stakeholders.

- Electricity Consumption

The Department has implemented various measures to save energy and invited the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) to perform proactive maintenance and servicing of the air-conditioning systems and chiller plants, thereby containing the impact of increased services on electricity consumption. There was a decrease of 3% in electricity consumption in 2020 compared with that in 2019, mainly due to the suspension of passenger clearance services at some border control points due to the pandemic and various energy saving measures carried out by the Department. The Department would continue to support Government's objective on electricity saving by implementing various electricity saving measures.

- Energy Audit

With an aim to identifying more energy management opportunities for improving energy efficiency, we engaged EMSD to conduct energy audit for CHB, Kwai Chung Customhouse (KCCH), and Hong Kong Customs College (HKCC) in 2015 and 2016 respectively, and have been

actively implementing the audit recommendations. By 2020, the majority of the recommendations provided in the respective audit reports were carried out; they included housekeeping measures such as raising staff's awareness by attaching energy saving labels on electrical appliances or light switches, "de-lamping" non-essential lightings and suspending passenger lifts during non-peak periods, and modification works of a larger scale such as to replace traditional lamps, fluorescent tubes and external floodlights by LED lights and aged air-conditioning components by higher efficiency units. The only remaining recommended improvement work, i.e. upgrading of the energy control monitoring system in CHB, is in progress.

- Carbon Audit

To echo the need for combating climate change, the Department also assessed the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (carbon performance) for its premises with high energy consumption, i.e. with an annual electricity consumption of more than 500 000 kWh. In 2020, the GHG emissions of four buildings and three control points with a total floor area of 147 395 square metres were 20 744 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent.

- Renewable Energy

We respond to the government's encouragement on the use of Renewable Energy (RE) and have installed photovoltaic panels for generating solar energy in some of the Department's major premises, including CHB and KCCH, and the generated electricity is returning to the electricity supply of those premises. This installation will help contribute to and promote the use of RE in energy saving.

- Use of Recycled Paper

Out of the total paper consumption by the Department in 2020, 52.2% was recycled paper.

- *Indoor Air Quality*

We have participated in the Indoor Air Quality Certification Scheme launched by EPD since 2011 and engaged a contractor to inspect office premises with construction floor area exceeding 10 000 m² every year. In 2020, CHB was awarded with “Excellent Class” certificate for its indoor air quality and two other premises – KCCH and Tsing Chau Street Customs Staff Quarters – were both awarded with “Good Class” certificates.

- *Use of Plastic Waste Bags*

Our building management contractors are regularly reminded to reduce reliance on plastic waste bags for their cleansing services and are required by tender conditions to use plastic waste bags made from degradable or recycled materials.

- *Reduction of Waste from Catering*

In support of the Government’s drive to reduce food waste, we signed the Food Wise Charter in October 2015. In 2020, we continued to carry out a number of corresponding measures including the display of posters and publicity materials at staff canteens to arouse staff’s awareness. The staff canteen and Mess at CHB have been offering the option of “less rice” for meals and “lesser number of courses” in banquet menu and have complied with the requirement on “Avoidance of Use of Disposable Tableware” by not providing plastic straws and poly-foam food containers, and using paper-based food containers and wooden tableware for take-away meals instead.

Looking Forward

We will uphold the impetus in advocating a green workplace and continue to inculcate deeper awareness among our staff on the essence of green living.

Comments and Suggestions

This report is accessible on our homepage at www.customs.gov.hk. We welcome feedback conveyed either in writing to our Green Manager at the Customs Headquarters Building, 222 Java Road, North Point, Hong Kong or via e-mail at customsenquiry@customs.gov.hk.

Customs and Excise Department
December 2021