Mission

To work with others and continue to build partnerships in the pursuance of sustainable development objectives.

Highlights

- Opened the Compliance Assistance Centre to provide operators with advice and information on environmental compliance.
- Worked with the Link Management Ltd and Housing Society to reduce environmental problems from large-scale renovation works on public housing estates.
- Promoted green paint-spraying techniques to vehicle repair workshops.
- Published a handy photo reference book for construction workers on good environmental practices.
- Supported a project by the Hong Kong Federation of Restaurants and Related Trades to develop measures for controlling cooking fumes.
- Collaborated with the Airport Authority on a green restaurant competition for catering outlets at the airport.
- Handled 42,413 enquiry calls and 27,553 complaints.
Pollution control often requires the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) to persuade industries and other polluters to change their ways. Not surprisingly, operators can be reluctant to invest in cleaner technologies or adopt new practices, especially if they are unaware of the benefits or options open to them. The EPD therefore has sought to bridge the gap in understanding by forming partnerships with major polluters and helping them to improve their environmental performance. Four industries have been targeted because they attract the most pollution complaints - the construction trade, restaurants, vehicle repair workshops and property managers.

The next step is to extend these benefits to other industries. About 20 sectors in Hong Kong are affected by environmental regulations. The EPD does not have the resources to establish formal partnerships with each of them, but we can push our doors open wider and make it easier for companies to get environmental information. In 2006 the Compliance Assistance Centre (CAC) was launched in a convenient location to offer free environmental information and advice to operators, especially smaller businesses. We also continued to develop programmes with our formal partners to advance pollution-control technologies and identify areas for improvement.

**Compliance Assistance Centre**

One of the stumbling blocks in our efforts to work with operators outside the partnership programmes has been that many smaller businesses and trades are not part of industry associations. This makes it difficult to reach out to them, so instead we are encouraging them to come to us. The CAC was opened in Southorn Centre, next to the Wan Chai Mass Transit Railway, in September 2006, to provide a one-stop source of information in a location that is easily accessible to operators.

Anyone can drop by the CAC to get advice and information on a wide range of environmental matters, such as regulatory requirements, how to tackle common pollution problems, updated compliance guides, licence and permit applications, environmental management tools such as ISO 14001 and lists of environmental consultants and contractors. EPD staff are on hand to answer questions and provide general guidance. A dedicated web site has been set up at [www.epd.gov.hk/epd/english/cac/index.html](http://www.epd.gov.hk/epd/english/cac/index.html) and operators can also call the EPD’s hotline at 2838 3111.

The EPD also organised publicity programmes to support the CAC’s launch and promote more environmentally sustainable business practices. In September 2006 the CAC was introduced to the business community at the annual SME (Small and Medium Enterprises) Night on Business Facilitation Success Stories, which was co-organised by the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce (HKGCC) and the Economic Analysis and Business Facilitation Unit (EABFU) of the Financial Secretary’s Office. We also set up a booth on the CAC at the Trade Development Council’s Eco-Expo Asia in October 2006. The CAC is now receiving about 450 cases per month.

We will bolster our service to businesses in 2007 with the distribution of a new Business Guide that contains generic and industry-specific environmental advice on how to comply with Hong Kong’s environmental regulations. The key aim will be to concentrate the necessary information in one place and make it easier for operators to find out how to control their environmental impacts.
The expansion of our compliance assistance programme was made possible by the insights we gained through our formal partnerships. The EPD has learned much about industry constraints and concerns and this has helped us to identify what type of information and assistance is needed. Most encouragingly, the learning process has been two-way. Operators have started initiating programmes and are taking a greater lead in promoting pollution control.

The restaurant trade was particularly active in this respect in 2006. The Hong Kong Federation of Restaurants and Related Trades set up a project to develop practical mitigation measures to control cooking fume emissions, particularly from small and medium restaurants. The project is funded by the SME Development Fund of the Trade & Industry Department and supported by the Business Environment Council, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and Chinese Manufacturers Association, with technical guidance and advice from the EPD. It serves as a good example of a voluntary initiative by an industry to enhance its environmental performance.

The vehicle repair trade has also been active in finding ways to reduce pollution. Environmental Ambassadors from the trade helped to promote three workshops on greener spraying techniques organised by the EPD and the Vocational Training Council’s Automobile Industry Training Centre. The workshops, held in March 2006, offered workers hands-on experience with high-volume, low-pressure paint spraying guns, which can reduce wastage of paint and increase paint transfer efficiency to more than 65 per cent from 30 per cent with conventional guns. The application of the technology was incorporated into a leaflet of environmental tips for the vehicle repair trade.

The EPD has also continued to reach out to operators. In 2006 we made a special effort to work with the Link Management Ltd and the Housing Society, who are carrying out a number of large-scale developments in the commercial premises of public housing estates. We identified potential sources of complaint, such as demolition, hours of work, number of sensitive receivers and nearby existing pollution problems, and provided the operators with generic pollution-reduction guidelines that they could incorporate into their design and construction work. During the year we also launched a new green property management web site to provide all property managers with easy-to-access information on resolving environmental issues, and we continued to participate in the Quality Building Management Competition organised by the Home Affairs Department. Since 2004 we have conducted more than 1 000 non-enforcement environmental audits for the competition.
Our longest-running partnership is with the construction industry. For almost ten years, we have been working with builders, developers and their workers to reduce the noise, dust, waste and water pollution from their activities. This partnership, combined with enforcement activities, has led to considerably fewer prosecutions related to construction work. For example, prosecutions for noise, a major problem on construction sites, have fallen from more than 250 in the late 1990s to 86 in 2006. We would like the improvements to continue and in 2006, we joined efforts with the Construction Industry Training Authority to start training dedicated Environment Officers for construction sites. We also published a pocket-sized reference for workers that uses photos to show acceptable and unacceptable construction practices as well as a booklet that provides an overview of the partnership programme and its achievements to promote green construction.

Many industries are increasingly keen to reduce their pollution because it can mean cost-savings and because they care about their environment. The EPD is tapping into those impulses through the partnership programmes and the CAC, by pointing operators in the right direction and providing advice and guidance. We still need to be firm in carrying out inspections and enforcement, but through gentle persuasion we have also been able to foster a strong voluntary commitment from industries to improve their environmental performance.

Participants who complete the CITA Environmental Officer Course (left) will receive a certificate (right).
Looking Ahead

1. Extend CAC services to more specific business trades/industries.

2. Produce an environmental guidebook to facilitate business and trades in pollution prevention and environmental compliance.

3. Support the restaurant trade to produce a package on practical measures and guidelines to mitigate cooking fume emission from restaurants.

4. Continue our collaboration with the Airport Authority to promote good environmental practices in the airport community.

5. Enhance the environmental quality of construction managers, workers and their activities through vigorous training and implementation of the former Environment, Transport and Works Bureau’s Pay for Safety and Environment Scheme.

6. Collaborate with the property management sector to minimise water pollution problems associated with their sewerage systems and waste handling activities.

Boxes on Topical Issues