

Customs and Excise Department Environmental Report 2003 and 2004

Introduction

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

- (a) collection and protection of revenue on dutiable goods;
- (b) narcotics interdiction;
- (c) prevention and detection of smuggling;
- (d) intellectual property rights protection; and
- (e) trade controls and consumer protection.

2. As at 31 December 2003 and 31 December 2004, the Department had an establishment of 4 989 and 4 947 respectively, with officers accommodated in offices at over 30 different locations over 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; and

- (c) contain the emission of pollutants from our vehicular and launch fleets within the regulatory standards stipulated under various legislation.

4. On the law enforcement side, we co-operate with and support the Environmental Protection Department (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, radioactive substances and other chemicals which are known to be harmful to the environment, under various legislation.

5. On the other hand, our enforcement operations against the supply, sale and use of illicit fuel in motor vehicles under the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance (Cap. 109) complement the enforcement of the Air Pollution Control (Motor Vehicle Fuel) Regulation⁽¹⁾ although it is not our Department's authority to enforce this Regulation. In 2003 and 2004, we cracked down 31 marked oil detreating plants, 1 894 illegal fuel filling stations, and seized and prevented about 4120 123 litres of illicit fuel from getting into the black market. During these two years, we also conducted 24 operations territory-wide to check motor vehicles on the road and detected 350 cases of vehicles using illicit fuel. In addition, we mounted 33 joint operations with the Police, Transport Department and Environmental Protection Department with focus on various levels of illicit fuel activities.

Review of the Department's Environmental Performance in 2003 and 2004

Green housekeeping measures

6. We have since 1999 introduced a series of green housekeeping measures in the Department designed to minimize the consumption of resources and promote waste reduction, recovery and recycling in the workplace. These green housekeeping measures have been effectively implemented throughout the Department by the Office Managers of individual Formations who are appointed as Green Executives. In addition, we have issued practical guidelines to our staff on

(¹) To protect air quality, the Air Pollution Control (Motor Vehicle Fuel) Regulation 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 a 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.

how to save paper and energy, and enlisted their support to complement our green housekeeping efforts through peer influence and encouragement from the management.

Paperless trade

7. To step up facilitation for the trading community and enhance the Government's efficiency, the Department joined with the Trade and Industry Department and the Census and Statistics Department to embark on developing the Electronic System for Cargo Manifest (EMAN). The system provided 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. The first phase of EMAN had been operating smoothly since its operation in April 2003, and with a reasonable take-up rate of air and rail transport, electronic submission of cargo manifest of air and rail has become mandatory since July 2004.

8. The electronic service of Textiles Trader Registration Scheme ⁽²⁾ has been implemented as from 30 May 2003. The on-line TTRS service permits integrated submissions of all type of notifications to cover import, export and transshipment of textile products. With the on-line system, electronic TTRS notifications are made available to the Trade and Industry Department and the Customs and Excise Department prior to departure/entry of the shipments.

Computerization

9. The facilitation of the Department to replace paper correspondence by e-mails as the main communication mode in the workplace was made possible under the Government Office Automation (GOA) Programme. With the rollout of the pilot run of the Accessibility Programme in June 2003, all staff members were covered by the GOA network and could communicate with other GOA users within and outside the Department electronically, gain access to information available in the Government Common Application System, Government Bulletin

(2) All import and export of textiles are subject to licence under the Import and Export Ordinance, Cap. 60. The Textiles Trader Registration Scheme (TTRS) is a trade facilitation scheme under the framework of the Import and Export (General) Regulation. Textiles traders registered under the Scheme are exempted from the licensing requirement for certain import, export and transshipment of textile products. They may complete paper notifications by themselves and submit the same to Trade and Industry Department through the carriers with prescribed notification forms purchased from TID.

Boards, the Central Cyber Government Office as well as the Department's internal Electronic Filing System. To this end, 98 info-stations were installed in various offices of the Department to facilitate staff's access.

10. Upon the implementation of Departmental Portal in April 2004, staff members are able to process leave applications and acquire payroll information electronically under the e-Leave and e-Payroll system through the existing GOA Programme and the Accessibility Programme. The electronic mode of communication across the Department has been further enhanced and communication on paper and reliance on hard copies of information and reference materials thus had been significantly reduced.

Replacement Rate of Working Dress

11. To achieve resources savings in working dress replacement, the replacement period has been extended from 12 months to 24 months with effect from March 2004. Such green measure is well received by the staff members.

Reduction of Pollutant Emission of Customs launches

12. The Department changed the fuel used in our launches to ultra low sulphur diesel in 2001 and remained committed to this course in reducing pollutant emission.

Closing Remarks

13. 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.