

Customs and Excise Department

Controlling Officer's Environmental Report 2006

Customs and Excise Department is responsible for a number of important law enforcement functions including anti-smuggling, prevention of drug trafficking, protection of intellectual property rights, exercise of trade control duties, safeguarding of consumer interests, collection and protection of public revenue.

Department's Environmental Policy

2. We are a progressive and forward-looking Customs organization. In discharging our role as the 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 and enhancing the environmental quality of the Department's services and activities.

3. We are conscious of the need to deliver our services and conduct our operations in an environmentally friendly and responsible manner. Accordingly, we have put in place appropriate environmental measures in our various operations which include -

(i) Disposal of Seizures

The Department disposes of seizures in accordance with the best practices for the disposal of solid and liquid wastes. We have taken the lead in participating in the "Rechargeable Battery Recycling Programme". The Programme, organized by a tripartite working group consisting of Environmental Protection Department (EPD), conversation groups and the battery trade, was aimed at minimizing the damage to the environment possibly caused by disposal of harmful materials and to conserve valuable natural resources. Starting from September 2006, rechargeable batteries seized by the Department have been sent to EPD, which would then be transported to overseas country for recycling by designated treatment plant. This has replaced the previous practice of disposing the seized batteries by landfill.

(ii) *Combating Illicit Fuel Activities*

Our 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. In 2006, we neutralized 11 marked oil detreating plants, 960 illegal fuel filling stations, and seized 804,100 litres of illicit fuel and thus preventing them from reaching the black market. During the year, we also conducted a territory-wide operation code-named Operation ‘Grand Rooster’ and checked 19,978 motor vehicles, 108 of them were found using illicit fuel. In addition, we mounted 82 joint operations with the concerned Government departments, namely the Police, Fire Services Department, Transport Department, Lands Department and EPD, aiming at neutralizing illicit fuel activities at various levels.

(iii) *Combating Illegal Trade of Ozone Depleting Substances*

We have actively participated in the United Nations Environment Programme and World Customs Organization Joint Project “Sky-Hole-Patching” in combating illegal trade of ozone depleting substances (ODS) and hazardous waste in the Asia Pacific Region. Phase I of the project was rolled out on 1st September 2006, in which a monitoring and notification mechanism on suspicious shipments of ODS was established. In 2006, we have conducted checking on 79 ODS licences. Three suspicious consignments were identified and they were forwarded to the Regional Intelligence Liaison Office for Asia and the Pacific for referral to overseas counterparts for action.

(iv) *Promoting Paperless Trade*

The Electronic System for Cargo Manifests (EMAN) was launched in April 2003. It allows electronic submission of manifests, so that air, ocean, river and rail mode carriers can submit manifests to the Census & Statistics Department, the Trade & Industry Department and the Department in one go.

After mandating the use of electronic submission of air and rail cargo manifests in July 2004, electronic submission of cargo manifests of ocean and river carriers has become mandatory in June 2006. EMAN has effectively served as a one-stop channel for carriers to submit electronic manifests and replaced the traditional paper-mode submission of cargo manifests, thereby reducing paper consumption by both commercial and government sectors.

(v) ***Environmentally Friendly Products***

The Department promotes the use of environmentally friendly products. In 2006, over 15% of the total paper demand of the Department was met by recycled paper. While minimizing our total consumption as far as practicable, we are aiming at a gradual increase in the percentage of recycled paper as colleagues became more receptive to its usage upon further encouragement by the Department.

(vi) ***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 closely monitors 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”, with a view to promoting their environmental awareness. Besides, staff members are also encouraged to make suggestions on green initiatives.

Environmental Performance

4. The Department has experienced a year of expansion in 2006. The establishment was increased from 4 939 as at end 2005 to 5 202 as at end 2006. During the year, an additional area of 29,173 m² being office / storage / land space was allocated to the Department to meet the rapidly increasing customs and trade controls service demands and operational activities at all fronts. Despite the full-year operational impact of the Tsing Yi Station of our Ports & Maritime Command, the substantially increase in frequency of extensive overnight operations (from 10 in 2005 to 72 in 2006) performed at the River Trade Terminal at Tuen Mun and the provision of residential induction training for new recruits of Inspectors and Customs Officers by the Department since 2005 have also given rise to an increasing demand of electricity. With the concerted efforts of our staff, we have managed to limit the impact of the overwhelmingly increasing service needs so that a mild about 3% increase of the overall electricity consumption for our non-joint-user premises was observed in 2006.

5. With the continuous contributions and efforts of our staff on various green housekeeping measures and the ongoing implementation of the Accessibility Programme, Government Office Automation Programme and the Departmental Portal, paper consumption has been significantly reduced from 54 025 reams in 2003 to 42 542 in 2006 albeit the increasing activities as mentioned above.

6. The Department has a close and on-going working partnership with EMSD, which offers professional energy and engineering advices and conducts visits or walk-throughs for devising practicable and effective measures in achieving enhanced energy saving performance for the building / office / working space. An energy walk-through of the Kwai Chung Customhouse was conducted in 2006 and a series of electricity saving measures were proposed and implemented accordingly. The Department will continue with such practice for other premises as appropriate.

The Way Forward

7. Our efforts to minimize resources consumption and to enhance the environmental quality of the Department's services and activities will be sustained. The environmental factors would also be accorded with priority in the planning and development of new projects.

8. On the planning of the Department's new Headquarters Building, we have actively worked with Arch SD and EMSD in devising various energy efficiency measures including the use of photovoltaic panels to convert light energy into electricity and various energy saving controls for lighting and air-conditioning. We will keep up with our efforts and cooperation with the relevant bodies in overseeing the successful implementation of the various green measures for the project over the coming years.

9. The Department has actively promoted the environmental awareness among its staff and their response is encouraging. We shall continue to build on this foundation on an even more solid ground to further improve our environmental performance.

Comments and Suggestions

10. 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.

Customs & Excise Department
December 2007