

CORPORATE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Environmental policy and objectives

In support of the Government's commitment to set a good example in environmental protection, the Department implemented the Green Manager Scheme in November 1993 to enhance green housekeeping measures in the workplace.

In June 1996, the Department issued a policy statement on environmental protection and assigned a Departmental Green Manager to promote corporate green culture within the department, remind staff of the department's environmental policy, enhance their awareness in green housekeeping practices, inspire their participation in green management programmes, initiate new action plans where appropriate in supporting the Government's long-term strategy on environmental protection and monitor the implementation of various green measures. Since 1998, the Department has incorporated in its annual departmental report major green management initiatives and performance.

Staff participation

To enable the effective implementation of various green measures, staff's support and vigorous participation are of particular importance. In this regard, the Department encourages staff to give suggestions on new initiatives of green management through the Staff Suggestion Scheme. Over the years, many practicable green proposals put forth by staff have been adopted.

Individual services of the Department have assigned energy wardens to monitor energy consumption in workplace and the implementation of various green housekeeping measures in offices and clinic units under their purview. In this regard, over 200 energy wardens have been assigned.

Waste management

To enhance public awareness in separate waste recycling, the Department has participated in the Waste Separation and Recycling Campaign since 2002. Waste separation bins are placed in clinics and office floors of the Department to enable separate collection of waste paper, aluminium cans and plastic bottles by waste collectors for recycling. In 2010, a total 8 319 kg of waste papers were collected for recycling. In addition, empty toner cartridges of colour printers and laser printers have been separately collected for recycling.

The Department follows the guidelines issued by the Environmental Protection Department in segregation, packaging, labelling and storage of clinical wastes and chemical wastes. Clinical wastes, chemical wastes and domestic wastes arising from clinics or laboratories are segregated from each other. Clinical wastes such as sharps boxes and used dressings are placed in red plastic waste bags, properly labelled, securely fastened and temporarily stored in the designated area before being carried away by clinical waste collectors for disposal. The designated area for clinical waste storage is also provided with visibly clear warning sign, protected from water and rain, always kept clean and dry, and secure from unauthorised persons.

To comply with the Waste Disposal (Chemical Waste) (General) Regulation, chemical wastes arising from clinics or laboratories are segregated from clinical wastes and domestic wastes, temporarily stored in a designated area which is only accessible by clinic staff and collected by the licensed collectors for disposal. Domestic wastes are placed in normal black plastic waste bags for disposal.

Economical use of paper

The Department has adopted the following housekeeping measures to economise the use of paper:

- Use blank side of used papers for printing or writing to reduce paper consumption;
- Reuse envelopes and file jackets;
- Use both sides of a paper for drafting and double-sided copying as far as possible;

- Rollout e-Leave system for staff with electronic mail account to replace printed leave application form;
- Avoid using fax leader page as far as possible;
- Encourage staff to make better use of electronic means in disseminating health messages such as uploading publications onto departmental website to keep printed publications to the minimum;
- Maximise the use of Internet and electronic mail facilities for communication to replace hardcopies;
- Cease internal circulation of hardcopies of clinic timetable, telephone directory etc. to reduce paper consumption; and
- E-forms for various licensing applications of the Department have been made available to the public on the government's official website.

Green purchase

The Department has implemented the following green procurement initiatives to support the use of environmentally friendly products:

- Extended use of recycled paper;
- Plain paper fax machines to replace thermo fax machines so that making a second copy of the thermo fax for filing purpose is not required;
- Photocopiers with double-side copying feature;
- Clinical waste bags and sharps boxes which are not made from polyvinylchloride materials and are capable of safely incineration;

- Use of plastic bags with recycled material;
- Use of degradable/recycled materials for outsourced cleansing service becomes one of the requirements in the service tenders;
- Mercury-free blood pressure monitors and thermometers;
- Liquid crystal display monitors to replace old cathode ray tube monitors for more effective energy saving; and
- Recycled and reusable stationery and other office supplies such as refillable ball-pens, reusable toners and printer cartridges etc.

Energy conservation

The Department has adopted the following energy saving measures:

- De-lamping lights to the minimum required for illumination and switching off lights and non-essential electrical appliances while not in use;
- Conducting energy audit survey for individual clinic buildings of high energy consumption to identify practical and effective energy saving measures;
- Modifying group lighting switches to individual switches;
- Installing air curtains at clinic entrances to prevent infiltration of un-treated hot and cold air from outside;
- Replacing magnetic ballasts by electronic ballasts and change T8 fluorescent tubes to the more efficient T5 fluorescent tubes;
- Replacing conventional illumination signs of emergency exit in clinics by light-emitting diode signs to step up measures in achieving energy saving; and

- Maintaining indoor temperature at 25.5°C during summer months for general offices and public areas equipped with air-conditioning facilities provided that the normal operation of essential medical services will not be affected.

Air quality improvement

Being the Government's health adviser, the Department has been taking a leading role in the smoke-free workplace policy since 1982. This policy has been applied to all institutions of the Department since 1996.

From both the green management and the infection control aspects, adequate fresh air ventilation in the working environment of clinics and health centres is important for protecting the health of staff and the public. Since 1999, Indoor Air Quality tests and cleaning of air-ducts of air conditioning systems have been conducted by Electrical and Mechanical Services Department periodically for clinics and offices of the Department to enhance the operational efficiency of air conditioning systems and to ensure adequate fresh air ventilation.

To support reducing air pollution caused by exhaust emissions of vehicles, the Department has taken the following measures:

- Encouraging staff to make use of public transport while performing outdoor duties; and
- Instructing all drivers in the Department to switch off their car engines while waiting and issuing circulars at regular intervals to remind them of this.