

## **ITEM FOR FINANCE COMMITTEE**

### **HEAD 156 – GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT : EDUCATION AND MANPOWER BUREAU**

#### **Subhead 873 Codes of Aid for existing schools**

#### **New Item “Asbestos management plan for school premises”**

Members are invited to approve a new commitment of \$55.44 million for the implementation of Asbestos Management Plan in the premises of aided schools.

### **PROBLEM**

We need to implement Asbestos Management Plan (AMP) in about 560 school premises found with asbestos-containing materials (ACMs) in the asbestos investigation programme completed in 2005.

### **PROPOSAL**

2. The Secretary for Education and Manpower proposes to create a new commitment of \$55.44 million for the appointment of registered asbestos consultants to implement AMP in about 560 premises of aided schools over a five-year period starting from the 2006/07 school year for the proper management of ACMs identified before their eventual complete removal from school premises concerned.

### **JUSTIFICATION**

3. According to the guidelines promulgated by the Environmental Protection Department (EPD), ACMs that may cause imminent release of asbestos fibres should be removed as soon as they are identified. With the combined efforts

of the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB), Architectural Services Department (Arch SD), Housing Department (HD) and EPD, all friable or potentially-damaged ACMs with imminent risk to public health had already been removed once they were identified in about 560 school premises under the asbestos investigation programme completed in 2005. There are nonetheless low-risk ACMs<sup>Note</sup> remaining in these school premises. These ACMs are in the form of chalkboards, vinyl floor tiles and corrugated cement roofing sheets, which are in good conditions and made of durable materials of insignificant risk to public health. Provided they are properly managed, these low-risk ACMs need not be removed immediately. Instead, they could be left in place undisturbed and be removed at the time when major repairs for schools are being held.

4. To minimise any possible risks, EMB intends to remove all ACMs completely and orderly from school premises in about five years. The proposed removal schedule is based on the estimation that ACMs would be removed from about 20% of the schools (i.e. about 110 schools) each year with reference to the following limiting factors –

- (a) asbestos removal works can only be carried out during major school holidays (such as Summer Holidays, Christmas Holidays and Easter Holidays) to minimise disturbance to normal school activities; and
- (b) the limited number of registered asbestos contractors (around ten according to EPD's register) available in the market qualified for carrying out asbestos works would limit the scale of removal programme that can be held each year for schools with ACMs.

5. The Air Pollution Control Ordinance (APCO) (Cap. 311) requires that owner of premises with ACMs shall appoint registered asbestos consultants to manage and maintain ACMs in good conditions as specified in the AMP before their ultimate removal. To meet this requirement, we propose to launch a cycle of AMP in the some 560 premises of aided schools and manage the low-risk ACMs therein, pending their eventual removal. To tie in with the above five-year removal

/programme .....

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<sup>Note</sup> Low-risk ACMs are cementitious, resinated, plastic and bituminous asbestos-containing materials which are non-friable in nature. Non-friable ACMs are ACMs which when dry cannot be crumbled, pulverised or reduced to powder by hand pressure. Asbestos fibres in these low-risk ACMs are generally locked into the base material matrix. Under normal usage, the quantity of asbestos fibres that can be released, if any, should be insignificant to present a health risk.

programme, the AMP will also last for about five years running from the 2006/07 school year to the 2010/11 school year. With the proposed removal of ACMs from about 110 schools annually, the number of schools requiring AMP will be reduced accordingly by 20% each year.

6. The registered asbestos consultants appointed will be responsible for overseeing all activities relating to asbestos management in school premises. These include formulation of AMP, maintenance of updated records on ACMs present in school premises and supervision of ACM removal works. To provide centralised AMP support services to all aided schools (including estate schools) concerned and to oversee the entire ACM removal programme, we will set up a centralised management team in EMB with staff seconded from Arch SD. The responsibilities of the registered asbestos consultants and the centralised management team in EMB are set out at the Enclosure.

Encl.

7. Based on the above schedule, removal of the remaining ACMs in the some 560 school premises is expected to be completed by around the end of the 2010/11 school year. The AMP should then come to an end. In the event that the removal programme cannot be completed as scheduled due to constraints mentioned in paragraph 4 above, we will continue the AMP, beyond the end of the 2010/11 school year if necessary, with available funding until all low-risk ACMs are removed completely.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8. Based on the estimated cost of consultancy services of about \$30,000 per school per year for implementing AMP (plus contingency), the estimated total expenditure for carrying out AMP in some 560 premises of aided schools during the five-year period is \$55.44 million. The cost breakdown is as follows –

	<b>Item</b>	<b>Estimated Cost (\$'000)</b>
(a)	Consultancy services from registered asbestos consultants (at about \$30,000 per school per annum for 560 school premises)	50,400
(b)	Contingency (10%)	5,040
<b>Total</b>		<b>55,440</b>

9. The estimated cash flow by financial years is as follows –

<b>Financial Year</b>	<b>Provision (\$'000)</b>
2006-07	2,000
2007-08	14,800
2008-09	13,440
2009-10	10,080
2010-11	6,720
2011-12	3,360
Contingency	5,040
<b>Total</b>	<b>55,440</b>

In view of the fact that the management cycle is arranged by school year and that lead time is required for the appointment of consultants, the estimated expenditure in 2006-07 reflects only the partial payment of consultancy fees for the first year of operation.

10. If Members approve the present proposal, we will provide funds to meet the cash flow required in the relevant financial years. For 2006-07, we have already earmarked the funding required in the annual Estimates. The staff cost for setting up the centralised management team in EMB will be absorbed from within existing resources of EMB.

11. The cost of actual ACM removal works, if required, will be funded separately under Head 156 Government Secretariat : Education and Manpower Bureau Subhead 900 Codes of Aid for existing schools – maintenance, repairs and minor improvement (block vote) for projects not exceeding \$2 million each, Capital Works Reserve Fund (CWRF) Head 708 Capital Subventions and Major Systems and Equipment Subhead 8100QX Alterations, additions, repairs and improvements to education subvented buildings for projects exceeding \$2 million but not exceeding \$15 million each, or individual subheads under the CWRF if the works are to be conducted as part of the larger school renovation or redevelopment projects. We will seek approval for funding in the normal manner.

## **BACKGROUND**

12. The Finance Committee approved vide FCR(94-95)75 on 2 December 1994 the creation of a commitment of \$27.519 million for the then Education Department to engage through Arch SD and HD registered

asbestos consultants to conduct asbestos investigations in the premises of aided schools. The exercise commenced upon the enactment of the APCO in 1997. Since there are only a limited number of registered asbestos consultants and registered asbestos laboratories, the asbestos investigation programme had to be carried out by phases and was completed in 2005. Of the about 900 school premises investigated, about 560 have been found with ACMs.

13. We consulted the Legislative Council Panel on Education at its meeting on 12 June 2006. Members generally supported the funding proposal. Some Members expressed concern about the long time taken for the asbestos investigation programme and requested the Administration to expedite the asbestos removal works as soon as possible. We confirmed that asbestos removal works would be carried out during major school holidays when the majority of students would not be in schools, and that necessary safety measures would be taken to minimise any risk to students who attended activities in school premises during these holidays.

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Education and Manpower Bureau  
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## **Major Responsibilities of Parties Involved**

### **I. Registered Asbestos Consultants**

- (a) to submit updated asbestos investigation reports in two months after verification of the remaining asbestos-containing materials (ACMs) and revising, if applicable, the Asbestos Management Plan (AMP) accordingly;
- (b) to conduct regular ACMs inspections and surveillance;
- (c) to label all remaining ACMs;
- (d) to offer advice to school management as and when necessary, and to notify parents, teachers and employee groups about the presence of ACMs and asbestos-related activities in consultation with the school management;
- (e) to arrange awareness training and briefing for school personnel concerned;
- (f) to set up a record keeping system for ACMs; and
- (g) to supervise the registered asbestos contractor for asbestos removal works.

### **II. Centralised Management Team in EMB**

- (a) to prepare tender documents and to arrange tendering for the appointment of asbestos consultants to implement AMP for schools;
- (b) to monitor and manage the appointed consultants for proper implementation of AMP; and
- (c) to coordinate with the consultants/schools for preparing schedules for carrying out asbestos removal works during annual major repairs exercise.

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