

立法會 *Legislative Council*

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Panel on Education

Background paper prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat for the meeting on 12 June 2006

Management of asbestos in school premises

Purpose

This paper sets out the concerns of Members on the management of asbestos in school premises.

Background

2. Section 69(4) of the Air Pollution Control Ordinance provides that the owner of specified premises, including primary schools, secondary schools and kindergartens, must engage a registered asbestos consultant to carry out an investigation on any asbestos containing material that may be present in the premises and submit an asbestos investigation report to the Director of Environmental Protection.

3. On 2 December 1994, the Finance Committee approved funding of \$27.519 million for the engagement of registered asbestos consultants and asbestos laboratories to conduct asbestos investigation in premises of aided schools. Thereafter, resources have been allocated under the annual provisions for the Education and Manpower Bureau for the investigation and management of asbestos in school premises.

Members' concerns

4. Since 2001 members had raised questions about the progress of asbestos investigation in schools during the scrutiny of the Estimates of Expenditure. In response to members' questions about the Estimates of Expenditure for 2001-02, the Administration replied that asbestos investigation for 340 school premises had been completed, and investigation for the remaining 581 school premises would be completed in 2001-02.

5. In reply to members' questions about the Estimate of Expenditure for 2002-03, the Administration said that asbestos investigation for 402 schools had been conducted in 2001-02. Investigation for the remaining 180 school premises would be completed in 2002-03.

6. Members raised questions again about the progress of asbestos investigation in examining the Estimate of Expenditure for 2004-05. The Administration responded that it had planned to conduct asbestos investigation for more schools in 2004-05.

7. At the Special Finance Committee meeting on 1 April 2004, members noted with concern that a large number of schools had been identified to have asbestos containing materials. The results of the investigation conducted in 796 schools in 2003-04 indicated that 531 schools had asbestos containing materials in their premises. Members expressed concern about deterioration of the problem and the follow-up actions taken by the Administration.

8. The Administration explained that since 1990s, the then Education Department had been closely monitoring the problem with the relevant departments, including the Environmental Protection Department, Architectural Services Department and Housing Department. According to consultants' advice, if the identified asbestos containing materials in school premises were not exposed or were found to be in good conditions, there would be no imminent danger to people's health, and the materials should be left intact. The Administration would carry out removal works where necessary or when suitable opportunities arose, such as when major repair works involving asbestos containing materials were required for the schools.

9. The Administration further explained to members its intention to launch the Asbestos Management Plan in the 2004-05 school year. Under the Plan, registered asbestos consultants would be appointed to undertake asbestos containing materials surveillance, and supervise and co-ordinate asbestos containing materials removal works. The Administration had earmarked funding of \$23.9 million in 2004-05 for the purpose.

Relevant papers

10. A list of the relevant papers on the Legislative Council web-site is in the **Appendix**.

**Relevant papers on
management of asbestos in school premises**

Date of meeting	Meeting	Minutes/Paper	LC Paper No.
2.12.1994	Finance Committee	Minutes of meeting	FC38/94-95
		Head 40 – Education Department Subhead 700 General other non-recurrent	FCR(94-95)75
		Administration’s note for Finance Committee on “Asbestos Investigations on the Premises of Aided Schools”	FCRI(95-96)5
23.3.2001	Finance Committee	Question raised by Hon YEUNG Yiu-chung	Bureau Serial No. EMB072
27.3.2002	Finance Committee	Question raised by Hon YEUNG Sum	Reply Serial No. EMB109
25.3.2003	Finance Committee	Question raised by Hon CHOY So-yuk	Reply Serial No. ETWB(E)036
1.4.2004	Finance Committee	Minutes of meeting	Chapter XIII : Education and Manpower
		Question raised by Hon Jasper TSANG Yok-sing	Reply Serial No. EMB001
		Question raised by Hon Jasper TSANG Yok-sing	Reply Serial No. EMB002
		Question raised by Hon YEUNG Yiu-chung	Reply Serial No. EMB038
		Supplementary question raised by Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong	Reply Serial No. S-EMB001