

For information

Legislative Council Panel on Environmental Affairs

Proposed Mandatory Provision of Refuse Storage and Material Recovery Room on Each Floor of New Residential Buildings

Supplementary Information

INTRODUCTION

At the Environmental Affairs Panel meeting held on 26 March 2007, Members requested the Administration to provide supplementary information on the proposed mandatory provision of space in the design of new residential buildings for the installation of waste separation facilities and the time table for implementing the proposal.

THE ADMINISTRATION'S RESPONSE

Background

2. Hong Kong is faced with an imminent waste problem as our landfills, which are currently the only means for waste disposal, will be running out of space in the early to mid 2010's. To reverse the rising trend of waste requiring disposal, the Administration has been taking various measures to promote waste reduction and enhance source recovery of waste for recycling. One of the key measures being implemented, as initiated in the 2004 and 2005 Policy Agenda, is a territory-wide source separation of waste programme which was rolled out in January 2005. This programme aims to make it more convenient for residents to separate domestic waste at source by encouraging and assisting property managers and residents to set up waste separation facilities on each floor of their buildings and to include the collection of more recyclable materials other than waste paper, aluminium cans and plastic bottles. The target is to have 80% of the population participating in the programme by 2010. Through source separation and other measures contained in the "Policy Framework for the Management of Municipal Solid Waste in Hong Kong

(2005-2014)”, we aim to increase the domestic waste recovery rate from 14% in 2004 to 26% by 2012.

3. A major problem encountered in implementing the source separation of domestic waste programme is that the majority of residential buildings in Hong Kong do not have a refuse storage and material recovery room on each floor and there is often a lack of space for placing waste separation facilities. Improper placing of waste separation facilities in the common circulation areas of residential buildings may also pose a fire hazard to occupants.

4. The Building (Refuse Storage and Material Recovery Chambers and Refuse Chutes) Regulations (the Regulations) enacted under the Buildings (Amendment) Ordinance 2000 require certain new building developments to be provided with refuse storage and material recovery chamber or material recovery chamber and specify the minimum floor space of such chamber based on the total usable floor space of the building. The Regulations also set out the design requirements of refuse storage and material recovery room to be provided on each floor of a building, and the provision of such room is optional instead of mandatory. To encourage developers to provide waste segregation facilities on each floor of a building, the Building (Planning) Regulation 23(3)(b) was also amended in 2000 to allow refuse storage and material recovery chambers, material recovery chambers and refuse storage and material recovery rooms to be disregarded in the gross floor area calculation.

The Proposal

5. Since the Buildings (Amendment) Ordinance 2000 came into force in November 2000, it is noted that not many new building developments have been provided with refuse storage and material recovery room on each building floor. After the territory-wide roll out of the source separation of domestic waste programme and in view of the importance of providing sufficient space on each floor to facilitate source separation for material recovery, the EPD submitted a proposal to the Building Sub-Committee of the Lands and Building Advisory Committee in November 2005 to amend the Building Regulations for introducing mandatory requirements for new residential buildings to reserve space on each floor for the provision of a refuse storage and material recovery room. Such legislative support is essential for the successful implementation

of domestic waste separation at source. The proposal was discussed in the meetings of the Building Sub-Committee and members of the Sub-Committee supported the general direction of the proposed amendment.

6. Apart from facilitating the recovery of recyclable materials, the provision of a refuse storage and material recovery room on each floor of buildings could also provide an added benefit of preventing potential fire hazards and hygiene problems comparing to the situation if refuse and recyclables are placed at the common circulation areas of the buildings. Such rooms are therefore necessary building infrastructure in any new building.

7. To address the concerns of some developers that mandatory requirement for provision of refuse storage and material recovery room on each floor of residential buildings might cause hardship to some small developments, it is proposed that the following developments could be exempted from such mandatory requirement:

- (i) residential buildings with a single staircase, or
- (ii) residential buildings having not more than three main domestic storeys and intended to be used for occupation by a single family, or
- (iii) residential buildings with total usable floor area of less than 1,320 square metres.

Current Status

8. The EPD is now working with the Buildings Department and the relevant bureaux on the details of the proposal and a programme for initiating the legislative exercise and related public consultations.