

(Translation)

7 June 2013

The Hon Alan Leong, SC
Chairman, Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene
Legislative Council
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong
[Fax: 2869 6794]

Dear Hon Leung,

Issue about Water Supply in Food Factories

In his letter dated 30 May 2013 to the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene, the Hon WONG Kwok-hing has raised concerns over a newspaper report on the use of public mains water from a toilet for brewing coffee by a coffee chain shop in Central, because there was no provision of public water mains inside the shop. Hon WONG has requested the Administration to review the issue. After consulting the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD), I am authorised to reply as follows.

Any person who carries on food business under the Food Business Regulation (Cap.132 X) (the Regulation), including preparing simple food items for sale, would have to apply for a relevant food business licence. Premises under application for a food business licence shall comply with licensing requirements, including the provision of public water mains on the premises.

When FEHD processes applications for food factory licences in respect of premises located in the common area of shopping malls or theme parks, FEHD would exercise discretion to approve other source of water supply which conforms to hygiene standard if public mains water is not laid on to the premises and the food factory in question only conducts reheating of pre-cooked food or preparation of simple food items such as hot dogs. Examples of alternative source of water supply are bottled distilled water or water drawn from mains water points at locations of acceptable hygiene standard. Licences will only be issued when the food premises have complied with all licensing requirements.

Upon issue of licence, FEHD will conduct regular inspections to ensure the food premises comply with the licensing requirements and conditions as well as the standards prescribed under the law. During inspection, FEHD will also provide health education and remind licensees to observe the food hygiene code. In addition, FEHD will conduct surprise inspections on a need basis and during follow-ups on complaints. Should breach of licensing requirements be found (including the requirement on water supply), FEHD will issue warnings to the licensee. In accordance with the licensing regime, FEHD shall consider cancellation of a licence if the licensee has been issued with three warning letters within any period of six months.

In order to facilitate licensees in maintaining food safety and environmental hygiene at licensed food premises, FEHD has mandated the appointment of a full time hygiene manager/hygiene supervisor who has completed relevant training to supervise food safety and hygiene at the premises. Furthermore, FEHD has from time to time organized “Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point” seminars/workshops to enrich the trade’s knowledge on food safety and hygiene.

FEHD has followed up the issue with regard to the coffee shop in Central which had drawn public mains water from an unsuitable location. The premises are now found to be using bottled distilled water supply. FEHD has conducted inspections to similar establishments and has not detected any other premises drawing water from unsuitable locations for use in the premises.

Yours sincerely,

(Miss Diane Wong)
for Secretary for Food and Health

b.c.c. Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene (Attn: Mr LAU
Che-wong)