

**LegCo Panel on Environmental Affairs
Subcommittee on matters relating to environmental hygiene**

**Provision of Public Toilets and
Toilet Facilities in Licensed Restaurants**

PURPOSE

This paper informs Members of the provision and management of public toilets and the regulation of toilet facilities in licensed restaurants.

PUBLIC TOILETS

2. There are 286 public toilets (100 on Hong Kong Island, 69 in Kowloon and 117 in the New Territories (NT) and outlying islands) and 596 aqua privies (village-type dry toilets) in remote areas where public sewerage system is not available. They are managed by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD).

3. All public toilets and aqua privies are open 24 hours daily. These facilities are provided for public convenience and are sited generally in tourist areas and where there is a demand. The smallest public toilet is the Macdonald Road Public Toilet with only two urinals, while the largest one is the Market Street Public Toilet with 60 compartments.

Design, Facilities and Refurbishment Programme

4. The design of public toilets has to be practical in order to cater for heavy use. Materials used have to be durable for ease of management and maintenance. The design should also provide for maximum natural ventilation and lighting, with ventilation openings at low and high levels on each side of the structure and roof ventilators, to encourage cross-floor and natural upward venting. In recent years, attractive coloured glazed ceramic tiles, smooth textured but non-slip floors, foot-operated flushing

device, stainless steel slab-type urinals, stainless-steel mirrors, liquid soap dispensers, electric hand dryers, litter bins, prominent signage, etc. have been widely adopted as standard provisions in our public toilets.

5. Most of the existing public toilets were constructed many years ago. We have a regular refurbishment programme in place to undertake regular refurbishment and maintenance to prevent deterioration of the building, fixtures and fittings, and to upgrade their standards to meet public expectations. For example, public toilets built or refurbished after 1997 are now provided with facilities to cater for people with special needs such as handrails, ramps, specially designed pedestal type W.C. pans and taps operated by lever arms. For the year 2000/01, we plan to refurbish 50 public toilets.

6. As for the aqua privies in the NT, we have already upgraded the toilet facilities in 574 aqua privies, which included improvement to lighting and mechanical ventilation, refurbishing their superstructure, provision of water supply and wash-hand-basin, non-slippery floor tile, stainless steel/fibreglass door panel to the toilet compartment, handrail and signage. We also have a programme to convert those aqua privies whenever public sewerage system is available in the vicinity into flushing toilets. 22 aqua privies are found suitable for conversion and conversion works are in progress.

7. Apart from the on-going refurbishment programme to upgrade the facilities and appearance of public toilets, there are other improvements in service such as the provision of toilet paper being implemented. Free toilet paper is now provided in some 100 public toilets in the NT and will soon be extended to 23 public toilets in major tourist spots in the urban area. Subject to resources being available, our intention is to extend the scheme to all other public toilets in phases.

Management of Public Toilets

8. Cleansing services for all the public toilets have been contracted out to private contractors at an annual expenditure of \$29.5 million while aqua privies are mainly cleansed by our cleansing staff. Cleansing frequency of these toilets is determined by their daily usage rate. A table showing the usage rates of public toilets is at Annex A. Full-time static cleaners are stationed in 159 toilets with high usage rate while mobile cleansing service ranging from two to five times a day is provided at

specified period of the day for the other toilets. Performance pledges setting out the service standards, cleansing frequency and contact telephone number of the respective District Environmental Hygiene Superintendent are put up at a conspicuous location in/outside the toilet.

9. To ensure that the cleansing services for public toilets are delivered to the required standards, we have specified the detailed job descriptions, monitoring system and default penalties for poor performance in the cleansing services contracts. Surprise inspections by our Quality Assurance Teams are conducted to check the performance of contractual service and the cleanliness of the toilets. Regular meetings are held with the contractors to review their performance and to determine areas for further improvement.

10. In addition to internal monitoring system, we also invite feedback and seek community involvement in monitoring the service standards. Members of the District Councils and Area Committees are invited to conduct quarterly 'Quality Assurance Inspection' on the standard of our public toilet services and to give us feedback and suggestions for further improvement.

Problems in Public Toilets

11. Users expect our public toilets to be clean, dry and free of odour. To achieve this, we have set very clear standard of cleanliness for the contractors to comply and issued supervisory guidelines for staff to check the performance of the contractors so as to ensure that the public toilets are properly cleansed and maintained. Despite this, public toilets are either perceived or found to be unclean, smelly and not up to standards. Many reasons are at play and the more common ones are as follows:-

- (a) many toilets were built with primitive design before the mid-eighties. Due to normal 'wear and tear' and decolouring of the original white tiles, they tend to give an untidy and unclean look. However, this problem will be gradually resolved through the ongoing refurbishment programme;
- (b) lack of consideration by some users; and
- (c) vandalism problem.

TOILETS IN LICENSED RESTAURANTS

12. As of 31 May 2000, there are some 8,800 licensed restaurants in the territory. All licensed restaurants are required by law and under their licences to provide and keep toilets clean and well ventilated at all times (Please see Annex B). Health Inspectors when conducting inspections at licensed restaurants will check the hygienic conditions and cleanliness of the toilet facilities. Irregularities pertaining to cleanliness are normally dealt with by verbal warnings and immediate rectification by the licensees. Blatant breaches of food safety standards e.g. storage of food or utensils in toilets are taken very seriously and are strictly enforced with prosecutions taken against the licensees.

13. Keeping toilets clean in restaurants is both a service and a duty of the licensees. While vigilant enforcement action may bring about improvement, we believe it is in the overall interest of the restaurant owners in terms of attracting businesses and in providing good customer service to provide clean toilets and keep them in good hygienic conditions.

14. In our regular liaison with the trade, we have reminded them of the need to pay more attention to this aspect and have distributed pamphlets, stickers, posters and a set of good toilet hygiene practices to them. In the next few months, we will step up our advisory and promotional efforts and solicit the support of various representative associations to promote cleanliness in restaurant toilets. We will also impress upon them that if they do not respond to our advice and remain languid, we will step up our enforcement actions by issuing summonses.

ADVICE SOUGHT

15. Members are invited to note the content of this paper and offer views and suggestions on raising the hygiene standards of public toilets and restaurant toilets.

Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
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Table Showing the Usage Rates of Public Toilets

	HK	Kln	NT	Total
Low usage (less than 400 persons/day)	40	30	18	88
Medium usage (400 – 500 persons/day)	6	16	17	39
High usage rate (over 500 persons/day)	54	23	82	159
				286

Legal Provisions/Licensing Requirements for Restaurant Toilets

- All restaurants are required to provide sanitary fitments in toilets of a standard not less than that required by the provisions of the Building (Standards of Sanitary Fitments, Plumbing, Drainage Works and Latrines) Regulations (Cap 123 sub. leg.)
- Under section 5(1) of the Food Business Regulation (Cap. 132 sub. leg.)(the Regulation), every person who carries on food business shall at all times keep the structure of any food premises clean and free from noxious matters.
- Under section 15A of the Regulation, every person who carries on food business shall at all times maintain every sanitary fitment in the food premises in a clean and sanitary condition and in good order and repair.
- Any person who contravenes section 5(1) or 15A of the Regulation is liable to a maximum penalty of \$10,000 fine and 3 months' imprisonment, and a daily fine of \$300 if the offence continues.
- All restaurant toilets are required to provide with liquid soap dispensers as well as electric hand dryers or paper hand towels as standard provisions.
- Licensees are required to keep toilets clean and well ventilated at all times.