

For information
26 April 2004

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
PANEL ON ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

Waste Oil from Vessels

Purpose

This paper informs Members of the latest developments of the waste oil recycling schemes for local vessels.

Background

2. Illegal dumping of waste oil at sea will cause marine pollution and is environmentally unacceptable. At present, illegal dumping of waste oil from vessels at sea is prohibited under the Shipping and Port Control Ordinance (Cap. 313). In addition, waste oil is classified as chemical waste under the Waste Disposal Ordinance (Cap. 354) and its collection and disposal is subject to regulatory and licensing control under the Ordinance.

3. Vessel operators, as in the case of all other waste oil producers, are responsible for properly handling waste oil and should not dump it at sea. We understand that vessel operators may have their oil changed at shipyards regularly during vessel maintenance and that the waste oil would be disposed of properly by the shipyard operators. Moreover, private collectors licensed by the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) are available to provide waste oil collection services for vessels.

4. Waste oil collected is either treated at the Chemical Waste Treatment Centre or at licensed private chemical waste disposal facilities for recycling¹.

¹ Waste oil is recycled to produce lubricating oil, hydraulic oil and moulding oil for use in automobiles, construction works, etc.

Waste oil recycling schemes for local vessels

5. Waste oil produced by local vessels contributes to only a small portion of the total waste oil generated in Hong Kong. In 2003, of the 12,000 tonnes of waste oil collected, about 600 tonnes (or 5%) were generated by local vessels². Moreover, waste oil generated by local vessels has not given rise to any major environmental concerns. According to the record of the Marine Department (MD), there have not been any major oil pollution cases caused by waste oil generated by local vessels.

6. Nonetheless, we have, together with the trades, green groups, local organizations, etc., been exploring different ways to carry out waste oil recycling schemes for local vessels with a view to facilitating proper disposal and recycling of waste oil. Paragraphs 7 – 12 below set out the details of two recycling schemes for motor boats and tug boats, as well as fishing boats.

Motor boats and tug boats

7. The Hong Kong & Kowloon Motor Boats and Tug Boats Association has initiated a waste oil recycling trial scheme to encourage its 300 members to recycle waste oil by offering free collection service. Under the scheme, vessel operators who would like to make use of the free collection service will register with EPD as waste producers. Registered vessel operators will then deliver their waste oil to a collection barge on specified dates. The Association has started the trial scheme since 14 April this year and plans to run it for three months within which 10 free collection services will be provided. The collected waste oil will be transported to a private facility for recycling purpose. Chemical waste control will be applied to the scheme to ensure proper collection and disposal of the waste oil. The Association will review the effectiveness of the scheme upon the end of the trial period in mid-July 2004.

8. We welcome the Association's initiative to carry out the waste oil recycling scheme for motor boats and tug boats. EPD and MD have provided assistance to the Association in formulating the scheme. For instance, MD has assisted in locating a suitable berthing site for the collection barge to unload the collected waste oil for road transportation to

² The rest is generated from land-based sources, such as repair & maintenance works of vehicles and equipment by bus companies, garages, container terminals and other vessels.

the recycling plant. Moreover, EPD has provided advice and assistance in drawing up the scheme such that it can meet the relevant legal requirements. The relevant government departments will continue to offer advice and assistance to the Association to facilitate the smooth implementation of the scheme.

Fishing boats

9. We informed Members in our letter dated 27 May 2003 that EPD had secured the support of private companies, a green group and the sponsorship of the Southern District Council (SDC) in providing a pilot free waste oil collection service to local vessels (mainly fishing boats) at the Aberdeen Typhoon Shelter. The aim of the pilot scheme was to further assist vessel operators in disposing of waste oil properly and to assess the local demand for the collection service. The six-month pilot scheme was launched in early July 2003. Under the pilot scheme, a marine-based drop-off point was set up near the Aberdeen Typhoon Shelter to collect waste oil on a daily basis. The collected waste oil was then sent to a licensed private facility for recycling. Promotion and publicity activities were sponsored and organized by SDC to encourage the vessel operators to use the collection service.

10. The pilot scheme was completed in end December 2003. The response was, however, not satisfactory. Despite that there are about 1,000 fishing boats at the Aberdeen Typhoon Shelter, the collector received waste oil from fishing boats for only 41 times during the six-month period. In terms of quantity, about 1.3 tonnes of waste oil were collected, with a monthly average of 0.2 tonnes. In September and November 2003, even zero quantity was recorded. We believe that, as most fishing vessels operate outside Hong Kong waters, vessel operators concerned normally would have their waste oil disposed of in other places, for instance in the Mainland, during vessel maintenance. For others who have their vessels maintained at shipyards in Hong Kong, the waste oil would have been properly disposed of during the maintenance works. Furthermore, some may make use of the collection service provided by the licensed private waste oil collectors. As the results of the pilot scheme have revealed that the demand for such collection service is low, the organizers of the pilot scheme have decided not to continue with the scheme. On 23 February 2004, we reported the results of the pilot scheme to the SDC.

11. The government departments concerned will continue to render support to the vessel operators who require assistance in handling their waste oil properly. They will also continue to take enforcement actions against illegal dumping of waste oil and carry out education and publicity programmes to urge vessel operators to handle waste oil properly.

Advice sought

12. Members are invited to note the latest developments of the recycling schemes for waste oil produced by local vessels, as set out in paragraphs 7 – 11 above.

Environment, Transport and Works Bureau
April 2004