

Waste Disposal (Amendment) Bill 2005

PURPOSE

The Waste Disposal (Amendment) Bill 2005 covers the “Control of Clinical Waste”, “Disposal of Imported Waste” and “Basel Ban”. This paper highlights the major provisions under these three areas.

CONTROL OF CLINICAL WASTE

2. Waste arising from certain medical procedures can be infectious and hazardous. If not handled properly, it can pose serious health risks to the public and cleansing workers. The Waste Disposal (Amendment) Bill 2005 defines clinical waste and proposes to legally control the handling and disposal of this type of waste.

3. The Bill provides for licensing systems to control the collection and disposal of clinical waste. A Control Scheme (the Scheme) will be introduced to require clinical waste producers to properly manage clinical waste, segregate clinical waste from other wastes, and engage licensed clinical waste collectors to collect such waste for proper disposal. The Scheme also includes a trip ticket system for tracking the transportation of clinical waste from source to the designated disposal facility, i.e. the Chemical Waste Treatment Centre which will impose a user charge to recover the cost.

4. The details for the requirements on the disposal of clinical waste and the charges for disposal of clinical waste at the Chemical Waste Treatment Centre will be set out in regulations to be made after the Bill has been passed. In addition, Codes of Practice will be issued to the waste producers and collectors to provide detailed guidelines on the segregation, packaging, labelling, collection, storage, transportation and disposal of clinical waste. The Codes have been drawn up after extensive consultation with the professions affected. We have recently approached the stakeholders again and they expressed support of the Scheme.

DISPOSAL OF IMPORTED WASTE

5. At present, import of non-hazardous waste for recycling purpose does not require a permit, but this exemption may be abused leading to the waste being disposed of in local landfills ultimately. To tighten the control and conserve valuable landfill space, we propose to make it an offence for a person to dispose of imported non-hazardous waste without prior authorization from the Authority i.e. the Director of Environmental Protection. Authorization will only be granted if the applicant can prove that he has exhausted all possible recycling outlets and all means to return his waste to the place or origin. The applicant will be required to pay the full disposal cost involved.

BASEL BAN

6. This is an international ban to prohibit the movement of hazardous waste from developed countries to developing countries. Since 1998, we have been implementing the ban of importation of hazardous waste from developing countries to Hong Kong administratively. Local and overseas traders are fully aware of the arrangement. The Bill will set out the Basel Ban in clear terms in Hong Kong laws. This helps to send a strong signal to the international community regarding Hong Kong's commitment to enforcing the Basel Ban.

Environmental Protection Department
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