

The more intense the heat, the colder the government gets?

Recommendations by Friends of the Earth (HK) on Climate Change

Global warming is detrimental to public coffers and health. A study report¹ commissioned by the Environmental Protection Department revealed that with every degree Celsius increase of the temperature in Hong Kong, a 10% growth of electricity consumption will incur in each household, and the chance of catching malaria will be 6.7% more likely. Friends of the Earth(HK) believes growing electricity consumption and infectious diseases will not be the only consequences of climate change and urges the government to restore the disbanded Co-ordination Group on Global Climate Change for inter-departmental collaboration on evaluation of climate change risk in Pearl River Delta and to make parallel plans.

Friends of the Earth (HK) points out that the Guangdong government is more proactive in tackling climate-change-related matters by comparison and involves 13 government agencies and academic organizations to assess the consequences of rising water level. On the other hand, Hong Kong set up a cross-departmental Co-ordination Group on Global Climate Change in 1991 and that is as far as it went. Nothing is heard of the group's participation in

¹Environmental Protection Department (2004) *Characterizing the Climate Change Impact in Hong Kong*
http://www.epd.gov.hk/epd/english/environmentinhk/air/study/rpts/climate_change_report.html



international conferences or its plans on cutting greenhouse gases. Climate change has been gaining prominence as a global agenda while the administration denigrates the role of the co-ordination group. FoE (HK) is disappointed with the government's dismissal of climate change.

FoE(HK) calls on the legislature to request answers from the government about the work of the co-ordination group for evaluation of the government's attitude towards climate change:

- 1 Who are the members of the Co-ordination Group on Global Climate Change since its establishment in 1991?
- 2 What is the average number of meetings conducted annually by the group? And what decisions have been made?
- 3 Why was the group disbanded in 2001?

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) is planning to conduct research on climate change. But the scope of the work requires involvement of various departments and it needs to cover at least the following topics: a) public health—the relationship between global warming and infectious diseases like dengue fever, Japanese encephalitis etc; b) rising temperature and heat stroke; and c) regional water safety.



The control of infectious diseases, like the increased cases of malaria and dengue fever as a consequence of global warming, is beyond the responsibilities of the EPD, but fall in the remit of the Department of Health, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, the Hospital Authority, and the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau. And extreme cases of natural disaster like stronger typhoons are not to preoccupy only the minds of the observatory, but also the insurance, finance, logistics and retail sectors, which could face a complete service breakdown.

FoE(HK) makes it clear that climate change is a reality and 2006 is the fifth hottest year on record in the past 120 years (table 1). This year's temperature is expected to rise further as an effect of El Nino. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported in early April 2007 that there would be increased risks of floods, water shortages and infectious diseases in Asian countries due to climate change.

Ranking of the planet's hottest years (Table 1)

1st	2005
2nd	1998
3rd	2002
4th	2003
5th	2006

source : <http://www.nasa.gov/> (compiled from data between 1890 and 2006)

The commissioned study by the EPD, “Characterizing the Climate Change Impact in Hong Kong”, estimated that for 1C temperature rise, the total energy costs of Hong Kong would increase by about \$1.6 billion, which would be most felt in the domestic electricity consumption with a rise of 9.02%(table 3).

FoE(HK) expects hotspots in Hong Kong like Mongkok and Causeway Bay will experience sharp increase in electricity demand under the Urban Heat Island Effect, exerting financial pressure on the residents living in those districts.

Impact of temperature rise on electricity demand and consumption (table 3)

Annual growth in electricity demand and consumption*	Temperature increase by		
	1°C	2°C	3°C
Domestic electricity demand (consumption)	9.02% (\$0.84 billion)	16.15% (\$1.5 billion)	30.97% (\$2.87 billion)
Commercial electricity demand (consumption)	3.13% (\$0.76 billion)	6.26%(\$1.52 billion)	9.38%(\$2.28 billion)
Industrial electricity demand (consumption)	2.64%(\$0.12 billion)	5.28%(\$0.24 billion)	7.91%(\$0.35 billion)
Total (consumption)	4.53% (\$1.72 billion)	9.52% (\$3.26 billion)	14.98%(\$5.5 billion)

*Electricity consumption based on 2002 electricity tariff



The emission of greenhouse gases per capita in 2005 in Hong Kong hit a record high of 6.5 tonnes superseding the old record of 6.3 tonnes in 1996. Friends of the Earth (HK) urges the government to make a firm resolution to face up to climate change challenges, and to set aggressive reduction targets of greenhouse gases. FoE (HK) recommends the government to start with the following tasks:

- 1 Restore the co-ordination group to facilitate the communication and support among departments, and to prepare the government and the society for appropriate actions towards climate change;
- 2 Encourage power companies to reduce the use of coal and increase the use of renewable energy;
- 3 Promote energy conservation and mandatory building energy efficiency label scheme; and
- 4 Explore ways to utilize landfill methane. °

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