

For Information

**THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
PANEL OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS**

Update on enforcement against illegal import of hazardous waste electrical and electronic equipment

This note provides an update on Government's continuing efforts in the control enforcement against illegal import and export activities on hazardous waste electrical and electronic equipment (referred hereafter as "WEEE").

2. Relevant provisions of the Waste Disposal Ordinance (WDO) are formulated on the basis of the requirements of the Basel Convention on the control of transboundary movements of hazardous wastes. Under the Basel Convention, there are two main categories of WEEE, namely hazardous WEEE and non-hazardous WEEE. Items such as computer main units and scanners are classified as non-hazardous WEEE. They are allowed to be imported and exported for recycling and recovery purposes worldwide. For hazardous WEEE items such as computer monitors, LCD panels and disassembled printed circuit boards, they are regulated under the WDO and their import and export are subject to stringent permit control. Based on risk assessments and intelligence collected, the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) collaborates with relevant departments to conduct enforcement inspections on container shipments at the port, and is vigilant in taking enforcement action against illegal shipment of hazardous WEEE. Importers of illegally-imported hazardous WEEE consignments are subject to prosecution. Container shipments of illegally-imported waste intercepted are returned to their place of origin. EPD will also alert the relevant enforcement agencies concerned outside Hong Kong for follow-up action. All hazardous WEEE is classified as chemical waste. Their local storage, collection and disposal are regulated under the Waste Disposal (Chemical Waste) (General) Regulation.

3. Over the past three years (2014 to 2016), the EPD inspected some 2,000 container shipments at the port and intercepted 131 illegal waste shipments, with 68 prosecutions completed so far. The total fine meted out by

the Court for the completed prosecutions amounts to \$1.4 million. The hazardous WEEE items involved were mainly waste flat panel display units, waste cathode ray tubes (CRTs), disassembled printed circuit boards, and waste batteries of notebook computers. Illegally-imported hazardous WEEE mainly originates from North America and Asia.

4. Imported WEEE is usually stored or recycled at open recycling yards in the New Territories. In the past three years (2014 to 2016), the EPD has conducted some 630 inspections on WEEE recycling yards. In 2016, the EPD conducted five joint blitz operations with relevant departments to combat illegal activities at WEEE recycling yards concerning hazardous WEEE, fire safety, land use and planning. The EPD has completed 33 prosecutions so far against violation of the Chemical Waste Regulation, with a total fine of around \$300,000. All hazardous WEEE found during the enforcement operations has been confiscated. They included waste liquid crystal display units (LCDs), waste CRTs and waste batteries, with an estimated total export value of more than \$5 million. The EPD has stepped up enforcement actions over the past few months and will continue to take rigorous enforcement actions against illegal handling of hazardous WEEE at the recycling yards.

5. On the international front, the EPD has established close collaboration with regulatory agencies outside Hong Kong and international organizations (e.g. Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law under the European Union, the Asian Network for Prevention of Illegal Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes, the International Network for Environmental Compliance and Enforcement, the World Customs Organization) to enhance the exchange of intelligence for tackling illegal hazardous WEEE movements. The EPD will continue to enforce rigorously the waste import and export controls under the WDO to fulfill the Basel Convention obligations, and to continue collaboration with authorities outside Hong Kong to promote source interception at the economies exporting hazardous WEEE.

Environmental Protection Department
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