



AUDIT COMMISSION CONTROLLING OFFICER'S ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT 2001

INTRODUCTION

Established under Article 58 of the Basic Law, the Audit Commission functions independently and is accountable to the Chief Executive of the HKSAR. The Commission carries out two types of audit: regularity audits and value-for-money audits. Regularity audits are intended to provide an overall assurance of the general accuracy and propriety of the financial and accounting transactions of the government and other audited bodies. Value for money audits are intended to provide independent information, advice and assurance about the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which any bureau, department, or audited organization has discharged its functions. As at 31 December 2001, the Commission had an establishment of 206.

OUR ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

2. The environmental policy of the Audit Commission is that it is committed to ensuring that its operations conform to environmental protection principles and promote environmental protection practices. To help promote environmental protection, the Audit Commission:

- adopts green housekeeping practices; and
- carries out value for money audits on selected government activities which have a significant environmental impact and on related environmental issues, with a view to highlighting areas for improvement in the implementation of Government's environmental improvement policies.

HOUSEKEEPING PRACTICES: GREEN MEASURES

3. The Audit Commission is committed to adopting green housekeeping practices. Since 1993, a Green Manager at the Assistant Director level has been appointed to introduce and review initiatives to improve the Commission's green housekeeping practices. Through the years, the range of initiatives has expanded. Staff of the Audit Commission are required to follow the following green measures:

Paper saving measures

Reduction of paper and envelope consumption:

- use electronic mail and intranet for communication and dissemination of information;
- disseminate the Audit Reports on the Internet (<http://www.info.gov.hk/aud/>);
- use PC-based faxes;
- use plain paper fax machine;
- avoid using fax leader pages;
- avoid sending original documents after they have been sent by fax;
- use photocopiers and printers with double-sided printing function;
- print on both sides of paper;
- minimize photocopies by circulating circulars and other documents instead of issuing personal copies to officers;
- review distribution lists regularly;
- use old sets of documents for re-circulation;
- send unclassified documents without envelopes;
- reuse old envelopes and loose minute jackets/use transit envelopes if required; and
- reduce number of seasonal greeting cards.

Reuse of paper:

- place “reuse green boxes” at designated locations to collect paper used on one side for reuse; and
- use blank side of used paper for drafting, photocopying and printing documents (including fax).

Recycling of paper:

- print Audit Reports using recycled paper or paper made from woodpulp derived from renewable forests; and
- place “recycle green boxes” at designated locations to collect waste paper for recycling.

Energy saving measures

- switch off lights, computers and electrical appliances not in use;
- conduct routine checks during lunch hour and after office hours to ensure that any unnecessary lights and air-conditioners are switched off;
- reduce lighting to minimum required for illumination;
- use venetian blinds to adjust room temperature when necessary;
- use staircases instead of lifts for inter-floor traffic; and
- use more energy-efficient fluorescent tubes.

Publicity/education measures

- issue internal circular to regularly remind all staff on the economical use of paper;
- display posters which remind drivers to switch off vehicle engine while waiting;
- post 'save energy' and 'save water' notices near light switches and water taps; and
- place notices near photocopiers to remind staff to make photocopies using reusable paper and to collect waste paper for recycling.

Other green measures

- enforce non-smoking policy in all offices;
- display plants in offices;
- clean air ducts regularly with a view to maintaining good air ventilation;
- conduct regular indoor air quality checking;
- place air purifiers near photocopiers;
- minimise use of the departmental car;
- switch off the engine of the departmental vehicle while waiting;
- use unleaded fuel;
- collect used printer cartridges for reuse;
- use refillable ball pens and clutch pencils;
- minimise use of products which are not environmentally friendly (e.g. correction fluid);
- repair old furniture and equipment;
- use hand-dryers in washrooms;
- reuse decorative materials in festive seasons; and
- exchange diskettes within and outside of department.

GREEN HOUSEKEEPING PRACTICES: PERFORMANCE AND TARGET

4. In 2001, the Commission maintained a similar level of paper consumption as that in 2000. There was however a slight increase in envelope consumption by 1% arising from the recruitment exercises and ad hoc audit surveys.

5. In 2002, the Commission aims at containing the growth of paper and envelope consumption.

6. About 65% of the total quantity of paper used in 2001 was recycled paper with at least 50% recycled pulp. In 2002, it is the Commission's target to increase the proportion of recycled paper to 70%.

AUDIT STUDIES ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES: PERFORMANCE AND TARGET

7. In 2001, the Audit Commission issued the following value for money audit report on environmental-related issues:

“ The Government’s sewage treatment facilities ” (Chapter 7 of the Director of Audit’s Report No. 36 of March 2001).

8. The Drainage Services Department is responsible for the operation and maintenance of the Government’s sewage treatment facilities. These facilities include sewage treatment plants, each of which is granted a licence by the Environmental Protection Department (EPD), specifying the terms and conditions to be complied with in the discharge of effluent.

9. The audit report revealed that there were a number of areas where improvements could be made in the operation and maintenance of some sewage treatment facilities and that the quantity and quality of treated effluent discharged from some sewage treatment plants did not comply with the EPD’s licensing conditions. Audit has made some recommendations to address the observations. These recommendations, if fully implemented, will result in significant environmental benefits.

10. The Audit Commission will continue to conduct value for money audit studies on issues which have significant environmental impact.

THE WAY FORWARD

11. The Audit Commission will make continued efforts to help promote environmental protection through adopting green housekeeping practices and carrying out value for money audits on environmental issues.