



AUDIT COMMISSION CONTROLLING OFFICER'S ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT 2021

INTRODUCTION

Established under Article 58 of the Basic Law, the Audit Commission functions independently and is accountable to the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. 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 government bureau/department, or audited organisation has discharged its functions. As at 31 December 2021, the Commission had an establishment of 198.

OUR ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

2. The Commission is committed to ensuring that our operations are conducted in an environmentally responsible manner and meeting the commitments of the Clean Air Charter. To help promote environmental protection and reduce air emissions, the Commission:

- adopts green housekeeping practices and energy-efficient measures; 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 policies.

HOUSEKEEPING PRACTICES AND ENERGY-EFFICIENT MEASURES

3. The Commission is committed to adopting green housekeeping practices and energy-efficient measures. Since 1993, a Green Manager at Directorate level has been appointed to introduce and review initiatives to improve the Commission's green housekeeping practices and energy-efficient measures. Throughout the years, the range of

initiatives has expanded. Staff of the Commission are required to follow the green measures below:

Paper saving measures

Reduction of paper and envelope consumption:

- use emails and intranet for communication and dissemination of information;
- disseminate the Audit Reports on the Internet (<https://www.aud.gov.hk>);
- use PC-based faxes;
- use plain paper fax machines;
- avoid using fax leader pages;
- avoid sending original documents after they have been sent by fax or email;
- adopt electronic templates of letterhead, memo and forms to avoid pre-printed copies;
- use photocopiers and printers with duplex printing function;
- use both sides of paper;
- minimise photocopies by circulating circulars and other documents mainly through emails 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;
- send greeting cards in festive seasons by electronic means; and
- endeavour to acquire electronic instead of hard copies of reference materials from other government bureaux/departments.

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

- set air conditioning temperature at 25.5°C;
- use venetian blinds to adjust room temperature when necessary;
- reduce lighting to minimum required for illumination;

- use energy-efficient fluorescent tubes;
- colour-code the individual lighting switches in multiple-switch circuits to identify lights not in use;
- switch off lights, air conditioning, computers and electrical appliances not in use;
- unplug all hand-held equipment chargers from socket outlets when not in use;
- minimise the use of personal electrical appliances such as heater, fan, lamp and kettle;
- set office equipment to energy saving mode during office hours;
- install timer adaptors to turn off office equipment after office hours;
- use computer workstations and printers with automatic energy saving function;
- turn off the monitor when leaving the office, even for a short period;
- turn off non-essential servers at night, on Saturdays and public holidays; and
- conduct routine checks during lunch hour and after office hours to ensure that any unnecessary lights and air-conditioners are switched off.

Publicity/education measures

- issue internal circular to regularly remind all staff on the economical use of paper and energy saving;
- post ‘save energy’ and ‘save water’ notices near light switches and water taps;
- place notices near photocopiers to remind staff to make photocopies using reusable paper and to collect waste paper for recycling; and
- encourage staff to attend environmental seminar.

Other green measures

- enforce smoke-free work place policy in all offices;
- arrange regular cleaning of carpet;
- clean air ducts regularly with a view to maintaining good air ventilation;
- conduct regular indoor air quality checking;
- place air purifiers near photocopiers;
- use recyclable laser printer cartridges;
- collect used printer cartridges for reuse;
- use refillable ball pens and clutch pencils;
- minimise use of products which are not environmental friendly (e.g. correction fluid);
- repair instead of replace;
- use hand-dryers in washrooms;
- install timer taps in toilets;
- reuse decorative materials in festive seasons;
- provide recycling bins in the pantry for collecting waste plastic bottles and cans; and
- use of environmental friendly sundries items.

GREEN HOUSEKEEPING PRACTICES AND ENERGY-EFFICIENT MEASURES

PERFORMANCE AND TARGET

PAPER AND ENVELOPE CONSUMPTION

4. In 2021, there was an increase of 60.5% (Note 1) in paper consumption and a decrease of 43.2% (Note 2) in envelope consumption when compared with 2020. All paper used in 2021 was recycled paper with at least 50% recycled pulp.

5. In 2022, it is the Commission's target to contain the growth of paper and envelope consumption.

ENERGY-EFFICIENT MEASURES

6. It was the Government's target to achieve a 5% saving on the total electricity consumption in government buildings from 2015-16 to 2019-20 under comparable operating conditions using 2013-14 as the baseline. With the concerted efforts from all government bureaux and departments, this target had been achieved in 2018-19, one year ahead of the original schedule. Building on the success, a new "Green Energy Target" has been set for the period from 2020-21 to 2024-25 using 2018-19 as the baseline, with a view to further improving the Government's use of energy by 6% under comparable operating conditions. Together with other government bureaux and departments, the Commission will continue to contain the energy consumption to achieve the new saving target.

7. There are two departmental vehicles in the Commission. The total mileage in 2021 was 9,109 km and the unleaded fuel consumption was about 1,883.71 litres. The related emission was about 8.2 kg of NO_x.

8. In 2022, the Commission will make continued efforts to promote energy saving in the office premises.

Note 1: *The increase was mainly due to the gradual resumption of public services in 2021.*

Note 2: *The decrease was mainly due to completion of recruitment exercises of the Commission resulting in fewer issue of notifications to candidates. .*

AUDIT STUDIES ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

PERFORMANCE AND TARGET

9. In 2021, the Commission issued a number of value for money audit reports which covered environmental-related issues, including “Upgrading and operation of Pillar Point Sewage Treatment Works” (Chapter 7 of the Director of Audit’s Report No. 76 of March 2021 - see paras. 10 and 11).

10. The Pillar Point Sewage Treatment Works (PPSTW) in Tuen Mun was built in 1982. In 2001, to cater for the increase in population and planned new developments in Tuen Mun district and to improve the effluent discharged from PPSTW, the Environmental Protection Department considered that there was a need to upgrade the capacity and treatment level of PPSTW. The Drainage Services Department (DSD) is responsible for the design and construction of the upgrading works and operation of the upgraded PPSTW. DSD adopted a design-build-operate (DBO) arrangement for implementing the upgrading and operation of PPSTW, and awarded a DBO contract to a contractor. The design and construction of the upgrading works of PPSTW were substantially completed on 17 May 2014. As of October 2020, the total project expenditure was \$1,858.9 million. The operation of the upgraded PPSTW commenced on 18 May 2014. According to the DBO contract, all concrete structures that may be in contact with sewage shall be protected by protective coating. Audit noted that, since December 2013, deterioration of the protective coating had been found by the consultant. After chemically enhanced primary treatment process at the upgraded PPSTW, sewage is fed into the ultraviolet (UV) disinfection facilities for disinfection by the UV lamps. The UV lamps were fitted with a mechanical/chemical cleaning system to reduce fouling of the lamps, thereby maximising the disinfection performance. However, according to the consultant, it found that the automatic cleaning system of the UV disinfection facilities could not perform well in keeping the sleeves of the UV lamps clean, and the contractor set up a cleaning team in July 2014 to clean the UV sleeves manually. According to the contract, there are 13 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for measuring the performance of the contractor in operating the upgraded PPSTW. Since commissioning of the upgraded PPSTW in May 2014 and up to October 2020, DSD had deducted a total of \$565,920 from payment to the contractor on 8 occasions involving non-compliances with 5 of the 13 KPIs. The Commission also noted areas for improvement in the administration of DBO contract arrangement. For example, as of January 2021 (more than six years after substantial completion of the design and construction portions of the DBO contract), DSD had not conducted a post-completion review for the design and construction portions of the contract.

11. The Commission has made a number of recommendations to address the issues.

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

THE WAY FORWARD

13. The Commission will make continued efforts to help promote environmental protection through adopting green housekeeping practices as well as energy-efficient measures, and carrying out value for money audits on environmental issues.

FEEDBACK

14. We value very much your feedback, which would be invaluable for further improving our work on environmental protection in the coming years. If you have any comments or suggestions, please let us know by any of the following means:

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(Attention: Departmental Secretary)

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