

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

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(Question Serial No. 1820)

Head: (100) Marine Department

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not Specified

Programme: (2) Port Services

Controlling Officer: Director of Marine (Mr S.F. WONG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Environment and Ecology

Question:

Under the Cross Boundary Notification Mechanism on Marine Refuse, the Government strengthens early warning, notification and co-ordinated efforts for clean-up operations through the Notification and Alert System on Marine Refuse, while enhancing cross-departmental and cross-boundary response capabilities via joint exercises. Please advise on the following:

- (1) the number of alerts issued under the mechanism, their annual distribution, causes of triggering the mechanism, affected areas, and the effectiveness of clean-up efforts, etc. in the past 3 years;
- (2) the average lead time for issuing alerts in the past 3 years, and the impact of the timeliness of issuing alerts on the clean-up efficiency as assessed by the Government;
- (3) the Government's contingency mechanism for addressing large-scale drifting of refuse during seasonal periods and after heavy rain (such as activation levels and mobilisation standards for vessels and manpower) and the implementation details in the past 3 years; and
- (4) statistics on the quantities of marine refuse collected in Hong Kong in the past 3 years.

Asked by: Hon CHAN Pok-chi (LegCo internal reference no.: 17)

Reply:

(1) and (2)

The Marine Refuse Computer Alert System (the System) of the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) makes use of an advanced regional hydrodynamic model to conduct a comprehensive analysis of data such as rainfall and the latest wind forecast. When exceptionally severe rainstorms are recorded in Hong Kong and the Guangdong Province, the System can simulate changes in ocean currents under the prevailing wind conditions to predict

the coastal areas within the Greater Bay Area potentially affected by marine refuse surges. Based on the alerts issued by the System and the actual circumstances, EPD will notify the relevant areas in the Guangdong Province through the cross-boundary marine refuse notification mechanism so that the relevant departments in Hong Kong and the Chinese Mainland can exchange information in real-time, strengthen the monitoring of refuse accumulation at sea and foreshore areas, and effectively coordinate and deploy resources for clean-up operations.

EPD has issued a total of 28 notifications through the cross-boundary marine refuse notification mechanism in the past 3 years (from 2023 to 2025). The breakdown by year is tabulated below:

Year	No. of notifications
2023	10
2024	9
2025	9
Total	28

Most notifications were triggered by the System under adverse weather conditions, occurring primarily in rainy and typhoon seasons. During heavy rain or typhoons, refuse on shore is more easily washed into rivers and coastal waters. The areas affected mainly include the Pearl River Estuary and the western waters of Hong Kong, such as the Wanshan Qundao, Neilingding Dao, and both the eastern and western banks of the Pearl River Estuary in Guangdong, as well as Tuen Mun, Tsuen Wan, the Islands District and the Southern District in Hong Kong.

The System will issue alerts 1 to 7 days in advance based on the distance between the location of heavy rainfall and the affected waters, allowing relevant departments to make early preparations and take follow-up actions. Since the implementation of the above notification mechanism and contingency measures, the shoreline cleanliness of Hong Kong has continued to improve. In the past 3 years, more than 90% of the coastal monitoring points in Hong Kong have achieved annual overall cleanliness ratings of “Good” or “Satisfactory”, indicating the effectiveness of the clean-up operations.

(3)

The Government set up an Inter-departmental Working Group on Clean Shorelines (i.e. the current Inter-departmental Working Group on Marine Environmental Management (IWGMEM)) in 2012 to coordinate and enhance efforts among the relevant departments in tackling the marine refuse problem. As for the Task Force on Emergency Response to Marine Environmental Incidents under the IWGMEM, a total of 57 notifications were issued to the relevant departments (including the Marine Department (MD), EPD, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department) under the Protocol for Handling Surge of Marine Refuse in Hong Kong in the past 3 years (from 2023 to 2025), so that they could effectively deploy resources and make corresponding preparation for timely clean-up and follow-up actions.

Specifically, when there is a massive surge of floating refuse during seasonal periods or after heavy rain, EPD will first issue a notification and alert to relevant departments in accordance with established mechanism. MD will, based on the details of the notification (such as indications that a higher volume of floating refuse may appear in certain waters), allocate manpower and resources and deploy staff to patrol the affected waters. If an increase in refuse is observed, MD officers will immediately arrange for clean-up operations. EPD is responsible for coordinating the response actions and monitor the overall progress.

(4)

The quantities of marine refuse (including floating refuse and domestic refuse from vessels) collected by MD in the past 3 years (from 2023 to 2025) are tabulated below:

	2023	2024	2025
Quantities of marine refuse collected by MD (actual weight in tonnes)	2 404	2 281	2 340

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