

**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**(Question Serial No. 0155)**

Head: (194) Water Supplies Department  
Subhead (No. & title): Not Specified  
Programme: (1) Water Supply: Planning and Distribution  
Controlling Officer: Director of Water Supplies (LO Kwok-wah)  
Director of Bureau: Secretary for Development

Question:

The water supply network in Hong Kong comprises water mains with a total length of more than 8 000 kilometres, most of which are laid underground. Water main leaks and bursts occur from time to time owing to the aging of mains. In this regard, would the Government inform this Committee:

- (1) What were the numbers of leakage cases, the leakage rates and the estimated quantities of fresh water wasted in government water mains and private water mains in the past 3 years?
- (2) What were the expenditures on the maintenance of government water mains in the past 3 years?
- (3) The Water Supplies Department has implemented the Water Intelligent Network (WIN) since 2014, setting up a total of 2 400 District Metering Areas in the public water mains network over the territory to monitor the degree of water loss in water mains. What are the expenditure and the works progress so far since the launch of the WIN?
- (4) What are the works progress and expenditure of the installation of master meters in public and private housing estates by the Government for monitoring water loss in communal mains?
- (5) If water main leakage occurs in three-nil buildings, are there any existing support measures provided by the Government to the property owners concerned to assist them in coordinating, raising money and engaging suitable companies for maintenance?

Asked by: Hon LEE Tsz-king, Dominic (LegCo internal reference no.: 10)

Reply:

(1) The respective numbers of leakage cases of government fresh water mains in 2019, 2020 and 2021 were 5 653, 6 114 and 6 153. The Water Supplies Department (WSD) does not have the relevant figures in respect of private water main leakage cases. The leakage rates of government and private fresh water mains are about 15% and 9% of the total fresh water consumption respectively.

(2) The expenditures on water main improvement works carried out by the WSD in 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22 were about \$610 million, \$860 million and \$1.15 billion respectively. The expenditure on water main repair works was about \$100 million each year.

(3) The WSD is now progressively establishing the WIN in the fresh water distribution network over the territory, with a target of about 2 400 District Metering Areas (DMAs). As at the end of 2021, about 1 550 DMAs have been established. It is expected that the establishment of the entire WIN will be completed in 2024. The expenditure on the implementation of the WIN is about \$320 million thus far.

(4) The WSD is progressively installing master meters for about 550 public housing estates and large private housing estates for monitoring water loss in water mains of their communal service. The installation is anticipated to be completed in 2023. As at the end of 2021, the WSD has already installed master meters for about 280 housing estates, involving an expenditure of about \$55 million.

(5) It is the property owners' primary responsibility to properly repair and maintain water mains in buildings. The government joins forces with the Urban Renewal Authority to put forward the "Integrated Building Rehabilitation Assistance Scheme" which provides one-stop assistance to buildings in need, including three-nil buildings, for coordination of building repair works. Apart from the provision of financial assistance, the scheme also provides practical information and technical support to property owners regarding the coordination of building repair works, such as engaging qualified registered contractors to carry out building repair works, aiming to help owners fulfil their responsibility of repairing and maintaining water mains in buildings properly. Moreover, the social service team of the WSD provides suitable support and assistance concerning water main leakage to three-nil buildings in need, including contacting owners, conducting home visits and providing technical advice, in order to help buildings apply for the aforesaid scheme and coordinate relevant repair works.

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**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY**

**(Question Serial No. 0380)**

Head: (194) Water Supplies Department  
Subhead (No. & title): Not Specified  
Programme: (3) Customer Services  
Controlling Officer: Director of Water Supplies (LO Kwok-wah)  
Director of Bureau: Secretary for Development

Question:

Regarding the Programme "Customer Services", please advise on:

1. the number of cases reported on overcharging for water in sub-divided units in the past 5 years; of these, the number of cases with follow-up investigations conducted and referred to relevant law enforcement departments, and the number of cases in which charges were made;
2. the total number of enquiries and requests for assistance regarding overcharging for water in sub-divided units received via the 24-hour Customer Services Hotline in the past 2 years, and whether the Department has strengthened enforcement actions with a view to preventing overcharging for water by landlords upon the commencement of the Waterworks (Waterworks Regulations) (Amendment) Bill 2021;
3. whether the Department had installed separate water meters for sub-divided unit tenants in the past 2 years, and ways to encourage installation of compliant water meters in sub-divided units in the future;
4. given that the tenancy control of sub-divided units has taken effect in 2022, whether the Department will conduct joint investigations together with the law enforcement department responsible for enforcing the relevant ordinance after receiving reports on overcharging for water from sub-divided unit tenants in the future, so as to stamp out overcharging for water; if yes, what the details of the cooperation are; if no, whether the affected sub-divided unit tenants concerned are required to report to both parties.

Asked by: Hon MAK Mei-kuen, Alice (LegCo internal reference no.: 8)

Reply:

1. The Water Supplies Department (WSD) had received a total of 56 reports of suspected overcharging for water in sub-divided units in the past 5 years (from 2017 to 2021) and had followed up on and investigated each case. 1 case had been prosecuted while 2 cases are under investigation thus far. As for the remaining cases, there was not sufficient evidence for the WSD to institute prosecutions.

2. From March 2021 onwards, a shortcut key has been added in the WSD's 24-hour Customer Services Hotline to facilitate enquiries related to overcharging for water in sub-divided units. Since then and up until end of February this year, the WSD has received about 1 500 related enquiries in total. The WSD has not kept a breakdown of the figures on the enquiries involving overcharging for water in sub-divided units prior to March 2021.

The WSD has all along been very concerned about whether there is overcharging for water. Apart from following up on reports or complaint cases, proactive surprise inspections to sub-divided units are also conducted so as to enhance the deterrent effect on overcharging for water. Besides, in order to let landlords and tenants understand the requirements and relevant criminal liabilities of the Waterworks (Waterworks Regulations) (Amendment) Bill 2021, the WSD has stepped up publicity on points to note for landlords when charging tenants water tariffs and ways to apply for separate water meters through a series of publicity and promotional activities including making arrangements to meet sub-divided unit concern groups and estate agency organisations, producing leaflets and posters and distributing them to occupants, as well as disseminating relevant information on the Department's website, etc.

3. To facilitate application for the installation of separate WSD's water meters for sub-divided flats, the WSD launched a Pilot Scheme for Installation of Separate Water Meters for Sub-divided Flats (Premises with Sub-divided Units) ("the Pilot Scheme") in June 2021 with streamlined procedures and requirements for the sub-divided flats having separate plumbing systems. Since the launch of the Pilot Scheme and up until end of February this year, the WSD has received 14 applications for installation of separate water meters for sub-divided flats. The WSD has not kept a breakdown of the figures on the installation of separate water meters for sub-divided flats prior to the implementation of the Pilot Scheme. In an effort to further promote the aforesaid Pilot Scheme, we have set up a hotline and a dedicated webpage, and are producing publicity leaflets, posters and banners to encourage landlords or managers of sub-divided flats to join the Scheme.

4. The Waterworks (Waterworks Regulations) (Amendment) Bill 2021 and the Landlord and Tenant (Consolidation) (Amendment) Ordinance 2021 are two separate ordinances. The WSD and the Rating and Valuation Department will individually consider each case and take relevant follow-up actions in accordance with the statutes and provisions of the respective ordinances under their purview. As such, complainants may report to both departments separately via hotlines, by email or in person and provide relevant information. Upon becoming aware of the situation, the departments will take follow-up actions and conduct investigations in accordance with the respective ordinances under their purview. The two departments will, according to the complaint cases and with the consent of the complainants, share contact information of the complainants to facilitate follow-up actions on the cases concerned.

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