

## **Guardians amid the Epidemic: Consumer Services Inspectors in Water Supplies Department**

(English translation of the Cantonese dialogue script)

Mr LAI Yun-lam  
(Consumer Services  
Inspector, Water Supplies  
Department)

I am LAI Yun-lam, a Consumer Services Inspector (CSI) of the Water Supplies Department (WSD).

To maintain personal and home hygiene amid the COVID-19 epidemic, people's water use habits have changed. Meanwhile, they are more concerned about the stability of water supply. They will report to the WSD once water supply abnormalities are spotted. The number of reports handled by the WSD drastically increased by 40 percent when compared with the pre-COVID-19 period, i.e. a rise of the average number of reports received per month from around 1,800 cases to some 2,500 cases.

We fully understand the importance of our frontline services in ensuring the provision of quality and reliable water supply to the public. One of my tasks is to handle customer complaints and enquiries on abnormalities to their water supply – of which in most cases are related to unstable water supply in their premises.

Irregular water supply are mostly caused by water seepage in inside service. In respect of the unstable water supply in premises, customers are advised to firstly conduct a flow meter test to confirm whether leakage exists in the inside services.

The general procedures of the flow meter test are as follows: (a) Turn off all water taps in the premise; (b) Compare the water meter readings taken at the start and at the end of a 30-minute period (or longer if necessary) to see if the water meter is registering flow; (c) If the water meter registers flow when all water taps are turned off, it suggests that the fresh water plumbing system is leaking.

According to the Waterworks Ordinance, the responsibility for fresh water plumbing maintenance and repair rests with the registered consumers (i.e. the customers). If the test result suggests that the fresh water plumbing system is leaking, the customer will be advised to employ a licensed plumber to conduct an investigation and to rectify the defects immediately.

If no problem has been identified from the flow meter test arranged by the customer under question and yet the water supply irregularities persist, WSD will contact the affected customer to arrange an on-site inspection to check for water supply problems such as weak or no water supply, followed by assessing the need of conducting subsequent tests, i.e. removing the water meter to check for the flow rate, the water meter condition as well as taking water pressure measurement, etc.

CSIs are very often required to perform fieldwork and on-site inspection. In dealing with the cases for customers in remote areas, we may sometimes come across hyperactive dogs barking or staring at us. Hence we need to stay alert, or make a detour when

necessary. Moreover, even though when we are working in the urban areas, we may sometimes conduct visits in buildings situated in the older urban areas, where the hygiene conditions are not so desirable. As such, we should at all times stay vigilant in adopting all the anti-epidemic measures.

In fact, it is more challenging to perform duties during the epidemic. Besides enhancing our anti-epidemic equipment, we exercise greater vigilance when visiting premises in various districts. Despite the pressure we are facing, we still managed to perform the tasks at hand amid the pandemic. To protect ourselves and others, we try our utmost to perform our duties while avoiding becoming part of the virus transmission chain in the community.

In face of the increasing number of cases received by WSD during the pandemic, to ensure the smooth handling and to resolve the water supply faults in a timely manner, we have to prioritise cases by urgency and potential impact of the problems involved. We often have to explain to customers that minor cases may take a longer time to process. We are pleased that they generally understand our account of the situation and are able to be patient in waiting for our handling of the cases.

We constantly monitor the quality of drinking water and ensure reliable water supply in the territory. In response to the challenges arising from COVID-19, we stand fast at our duties and strive to provide water supply services to the public.

Super :

Water Supplies Department logo

# # #