

LCQ2:Accuracy of fuel dispensers

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Following is a question by the Hon Miriam Lau and a reply by the Secretary for Economic Development and Labour, Mr Stephen Ip, in the Legislative Council today (January 24):

Question:

Regarding inaccurate measurement of a fuel dispenser at a fuel station and the enforcement of the Weights and Measures Ordinance, will the Government inform this Council:

(a)whether the Customs and Excise ("C&E") Department has taken the initiative to conduct spot checks on fuel dispensers at various fuel stations in Hong Kong in the past three years so as to ensure the accuracy of fuel dispensers; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(b)whether the authorities will specify clearly the maximum permitted margin of error for fuel dispensers; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(c)whether the C&E Department takes the initiative to inspect and check the accuracy of the weighing or measuring equipment used in various trades, so as to safeguard the rights and interests of consumers; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

Madam President,

(a)To ensure that the correct amount of petrol is supplied by public filling stations, the Customs and Excise Department (C&ED) has conducted spot checks on the fuel dispensers installed at filling stations throughout Hong Kong in the past three years. Details are as follows –

Year	2004	2005	2006
Public Filling Stations (no.)	5	1	6

Fuel nozzels (no.)	98	8	156
Maximum discrepancy found after investigation (% of fuel supplied less than or in excess of amounts shown)	0% to +0.3%	0%	0% to +0.8%
-% discrepancy (no.)	0	0	0
0% discrepancy (no.)	89	8	131
+0% discrepancy (no.)	9	0	25

(b) Pursuant to the requirement of the Weights and Measures Ordinance, all weighing and measuring equipment must be accurate. If any measuring equipment is found to be inaccurate, Customs officers will consider the circumstances of the case and all relevant factors when handling such a case. These factors include: whether the defect is due to fraud or tampering, whether there is any unavoidable mechanical error, and whether the trader has exercised due diligence and taken precautionary measures to avoid any inaccuracy. C&ED has met the oil companies and has reminded them to strengthen their internal controls and to ensure the accurate supply of fuel.

(c) C&ED is responsible for the enforcement of the Weights and Measures Ordinance, which aims to ensure that goods are sold according to correct and standard weights and measures. In general, when enforcing the Ordinance, C&ED will send undercover officers to visit shops that have been the subject of complaints. On completion of a transaction, the officers will disclose their identity and re-measure the goods they have purchased, using their own measuring equipment. They will also check the accuracy of the weighing equipment in the shop in question.

C&ED also conducts spot checks on shops in different districts to ensure that the weighing equipment being used for trade is accurate. If it is found that a shop supplies goods in quantity less than that purported, or uses defective weighing or measuring equipment for trade, C&ED will take into account the circumstances and evidence of the case and consider whether to take prosecution action in accordance with the Weights and Measures Ordinance.

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