

Agent convicted of overcharging subdivided unit tenant for water

The Water Supplies Department (WSD) announced that an agent of a subdivided flat in Sheung Shui, New Territories, was convicted today (February 25) of overcharging its subdivided unit (SDU) tenants for water, in contravention of regulation 47 of the Waterworks Regulations. The agent pleaded guilty to six counts of offences at the Fanling Magistrates' Courts.

This is the 25th similar conviction since the first conviction in June 2022, with associated fines ranging from \$1,000 to \$22,000.

A spokesman for the WSD said that the Waterworks (Amendment) Ordinance 2024 (the amended WWO) has strengthened the power of the Water Authority in evidence collection and information disclosure during the investigation of suspected cases of overcharging for water. The Water Authority can request the landlords, their agents, etc, to provide the tenancy agreement, receipt or payment record for charges for water. Failure to comply with such a request can be an offence, and the offender is liable on conviction to a maximum fine of \$10,000 and a further fine of up to \$1,000 for each day the offence continues. It is anticipated that there will be more prosecution cases. The maximum penalty for overcharging SDU tenants for water has been raised to \$25,000 to deter this illegal act. Moreover, providing false or misleading information to the Water Authority is also an offence with a maximum penalty of a \$25,000 fine and six months' imprisonment.

The WSD spokesman strongly appealed to landlords to apply for the installation of separate water meters for their SDUs, which can greatly reduce the risk of contravening the amended WWO. The WSD encourages the public to report any illegal act of overcharging SDU tenants for water for follow-up and investigation by the department. The public can call the WSD Hotline 3468 4963 or WhatsApp 5665 5517 to apply for the installation of separate water meters for SDUs. The WhatsApp hotline also handles matters relating to water overcharging in SDUs. Alternatively, the public can call the WSD Customer Enquiry Hotline 2824 5000 to report water overcharge cases. After calling the hotline and choosing a language, they can press "7" for reporting to staff directly.