

Food product company in Yuen Long convicted again for illegally discharging industrial wastewater

A bean product factory belonging to Sun Fat Heung Food Product Limited at Sheung Tsuen, Pat Heung, Yuen Long, discharged untreated industrial wastewater into a river again. The company was convicted and fined \$18,000 at Fanling Magistrates' Courts for contravening the Water Pollution Control Ordinance (WPCO) today (January 14). According to records, the company was fined a total of \$55,000 by the court for committing the same offence three times in July and November last year. In addition, the company was convicted and fined \$10,000 by the court on December 24 last year for contravening the Air Pollution Control (Smoke) Regulations as a result of a chimney of its factory emitting dark smoke consistently.

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) is very concerned that food processing factories disregard the law and illegally discharge pollutants repeatedly, adversely affecting air quality and the water quality of rivers nearby. To tackle the problem concerned, the EPD has been collecting useful intelligence through various channels, including reports from members of the public, analysis of information on factories' modes of operation and targeted blitz operations.

During a late-night operation in June last year, EPD officers successfully detected that the bean product factory in Yuen Long belonging to Sun Fat Heung Food Product Limited was again discharging turbid and milky industrial wastewater with a strong odour directly into an adjacent river, adversely affecting the river's water quality. After collecting samples of the wastewater discharged for tests, test results showed that the concentration of five-day biochemical oxygen demand in the samples exceeded the upper limit of the relevant legal standards by 53 times. Subsequently, the EPD prosecuted the company involved again under the WPCO. The EPD earnestly reminded the company directors concerned about the relevant legal liabilities in a meeting with the company's management. The management of the company confirmed that they had hired a consultancy to improve their wastewater treatment facilities with a view to preventing their factory from discharging substandard industrial wastewater. The EPD will continue to monitor the situation.

A spokesman for the EPD reminded operators of food factories that they must properly design their factories and install suitable and effective pollution control equipment. To avoid polluting the environment, they must also arrange for experienced technicians to carry out regular inspections and maintenance of their equipment to ensure that such equipment functions effectively and treats pollution emissions properly.

Anyone contravening the WPCO may be liable to a maximum fine of \$200,000 and six months' imprisonment on a first conviction. A maximum fine of

\$400,000 and six months' imprisonment may be imposed on a subsequent conviction. Anyone contravening the Air Pollution Control (Smoke) Regulations may be liable to a fine of \$20,000 on first conviction. A maximum fine of \$20,000 and three months' imprisonment may be imposed on a subsequent conviction.