

Two plastic recycling workshops in Yuen Long and Tuen Mun convicted for contravening noise and air pollution control

Two plastic recycling workshops in Yuen Long and Tuen Mun run by Hankang Recycling Limited and HK Bouteille Resources Recycling Business Company Limited respectively generated excessive noise and constantly emitted dark smoke, causing nuisance to residents nearby. The companies were convicted and fined a total of \$11,000 at Fanling Magistrates' Courts on July 16 and today (July 23) for contravening the Noise Control Ordinance (NCO) and the Air Pollution Control Ordinance (APCO).

In view of a recent increase in the number of complaints about pollution caused by outdoor plastic recycling workshops in the New Territories, and the issues about the poor operation of some plastic recycling workshops, their lack of environmental protection equipment and improper maintenance of their machinery, the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) enhanced law enforcement and inspections of such workshops. During an operation in January, EPD officers discovered that two plastic recycling workshops contravened regulations on pollution control. After collecting evidence, the EPD prosecuted the companies that operated the workshops. One workshop in Shan Ha Tsuen, Yuen Long, operated by Hankang Recycling Limited generated noise that exceeded statutory limits due to the lack of noise insulation equipment, contravening the NCO. On the other hand, the workshop in Lam Tei, Tuen Mun, run by HK Bouteille Resources Recycling Business Company Limited constantly emitted dark smoke from a chimney due to the poor operation of its diesel generator, contravening the Air Pollution Control (Smoke) Regulations. In addition to the above cases, two cases of the same nature involving plastic recycling workshops are being processed in court. Moreover, the EPD has issued abatement notices to nine other plastic recycling workshops, requesting them to reduce noise and gas emissions before statutory deadlines. The EPD will continue to follow up on these cases and initiate prosecutions against offenders.

A spokesman for the EPD reminded operators of plastic recycling workshops that they must properly design their workshops, and install suitable and effective noise and air pollution control equipment to reduce noise and air pollutant emissions. They must also arrange for experienced technicians to carry out regular inspections and maintenance for their equipment. In addition to holding briefings in collaboration with the Secretariat of the Recycling Fund on guidance about the recycling of plastics, the EPD has produced a leaflet (attachment in Chinese only) to explain to members of the plastic recycling sector the related matters of environmental protection and the department's continuous enforcement to curb illegal activities.

According to the NCO, anyone failing to comply with any requirement of an abatement notice commits an offence. First-time offenders may be liable to a fine of \$100,000. A fine of \$200,000 may be imposed on second or subsequent conviction. Under the Air Pollution Control (Smoke) Regulations, offenders may be liable to a fine of \$20,000 on first conviction, and a fine of \$20,000 and three months' imprisonment on second or subsequent conviction.