



Reduce waste - Help Hong Kong

What happens to the waste that we produce everyday? Only a few Hong Kong people are able to answer this question. Hong Kong people, who work day and night, in order to maintain their living, have no idea about the amount of waste they produce and how their household waste causes problems. Well, here is the answer. Hong Kong people produce 4.9 million tonnes of waste each year; or 13425 tonnes a day. With such a large amount of waste produced each year, Hong Kong is running out of landfills for the disposal of waste.

According to the Environmental Protection Department, the three landfills, which are located at Tuen Mun, Ta Kwu Ling and Tseung Kwan O will be completely filled by 2010 if we continue to produce millions of tonnes of waste. We can create a new landfill but the problem is Hong Kong is a small city and has limited land. To understand the seriousness of this problem, one should first understand the causes.

So, where does the waste come from? There are 3 kinds of waste - domestic (waste from family households), industrial (from factories) and commercial (waste from restaurant and hotels). The growth of consumerism is one of the causes. Since Hong Kong is an international city, latest products from different regions can be bought in Hong Kong. Many Hong Kong people buy new products and throw away as soon as another new product arrives. Computers and mobile phones are some examples. According to the EPD 1/5 of 6 million computers and computer accessories are replaced each year. These electric appliances have become one of the common wastes in the landfills.

Government has been doing a lot to reduce the amount of waste. First, to decrease the number of non-recyclable plastic bags in the landfills, the government has introduced a plastic bag levy of \$0.5/ per bag. Secondly, the government has been encouraging

citizens to recycle through advertisements and by putting recycling bins in many public places. Thirdly, the government is developing EcoParks, in which long term land is provided for establishment of recycling industries and environmentally-friendly manufacturing enterprises. Most importantly, the government educates citizens. The Hong Kong Government is doing its part but are the citizens doing their part too?

Some citizens are not doing their part at all. Many shops have participated in the plastic levy policy but there are still some shops, which provide plastic bag for free. Some shopping malls use unnecessary packaging to attract customers. There are citizens who choose to buy from shops that provide free plastic bags.

There are many ways in which one can help to solve this big problem. We can start with small things like bringing our own bag when shopping. Next, by recycling and reusing things, we can make a big difference in saving our resources and also reducing rubbish. One can avoid buying unnecessary things. One can donate clothes and electrical appliances such as computers to charities instead of throwing them away. Solving this problem requires effort from every person. The government is doing its part in tackling the waste problem but government's doing will be more effective if every person does his or her part too.

