

THE AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IN HONG KONG

Position Paper

Air Quality in Hong Kong

The Issue

Despite introducing in recent years stringent measures aimed at reducing air pollution, air quality in Hong Kong continues to deteriorate.

Position

AS A MEASURE OF URGENCY, THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT SHOULD ENFORCE CURRENT AIR QUALITY STANDARDS AND INTRODUCE NEW MEASURES WHICH WILL RESULT IN GENUINE REDUCTIONS IN AIR POLLUTION.

Rationale

Maintaining Hong Kong's status as a regional business hub depends in large part on its quality of life. A deteriorating environment will erode Hong Kong's edge over competing Asian cities. Air pollution is one obvious negative factor in the quality of life in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong's deteriorating air quality causes the premature deaths of hundreds of residents every year. Where the means exist to prevent these deaths, and thousands more illnesses, authorities have an obligation to take appropriate actions. These premature deaths and pollution-related illnesses increase human suffering, social and medical costs in Hong Kong.

Recommendations

- As a priority, reduce the unhealthy levels of Respirable Small Particles (RSPs) by implementing the use of cleaner fuel alternatives to diesel for taxis and minibuses.
- Better co-ordinate efforts among various departments including Transport, Police, EPD and EMSD to effectively enforce existing emission standards.
- With substantial population growth expected during the next decade, Hong Kong requires creative initiatives to provide convenient, integrated rapid transit systems to avoid a substantial increase in vehicle traffic. A regular conference is needed to collect input from interested parties, including the commercial sector, property developers, transporters, environmental interests, town planners, relevant government departments and the public, and to devise appropriate initiatives.
- Improve mass transit links to encourage satellite parking at major transit hubs, establish more bus-only lanes, increase minibus capacity and increase traffic-free zones in urban areas.
- Hong Kong is increasingly affected by pollution from high sulphur diesel fuel used in the Shenzhen area. This fuel is also reportedly smuggled into Hong Kong and used by taxis and minibuses. The Hong Kong Government should co-operate with appropriate government authorities in the People's Republic of China to improve the quality of diesel fuel used in the Shenzhen area and to take steps to curb smuggling.
- Support increased research to establish the main sources of air pollution in Hong Kong and elsewhere in the Pearl River Delta area, and determine cost effective mitigation measures.
- Consider the use of cleaner fuels for buses, rubbish collection and other heavy goods vehicles.
- Commence dialogue with restaurants to reduce emissions from cooking.