

PUSA ALERT

Issue No. 19 (Jan 2020)

SUMMARY

In this issue, PUSA would first like to report to the University Community of her communications with PolyU Senior Management concerning issues related to the safety on campus after its re-opening for staff members since late December. The next item is on a follow-up of the Staff Communication Sessions on the Review of PBSRRS which was supposed to take place in mid-November 2019. Finally, we will update PolyU staff on the upcoming AGM of PUSA which will now take place in early February 2020.

1. CONCERNS on the Campus Situation from Staff Members

On 7th January 2020, PUSA wrote to the Senior Management after collecting views from staff members on the testing results regarding PolyU air quality between the end of December and early January as issued by the FMO and HSEO respectively:

QUESTION FROM PUSA

Dear Seniors,

As a follow up of the HSEO Notice sent to all staff members on 28th December 2019 & 3rd January 2020, PUSA has received some concerns and views from staff members that we would like to raise here.

- a. *Level of Total Cyanide is missed in the test results released on 3rd January 2020. It was one of the contaminants mentioned and measured in the first batch (29th December 2019)*
- b. *The levels of Dioxins on 3rd January 2020 reported is at a range of 0.034 – 0.096 pg I-TEQ/m³. Compared to the AAQCs, Canada reference level, there is only 0.004 pg I-TEQ/m³ difference or 4%. Consider the uncertainties of sampling and instrumentation (often up to 10% or even more for engineering measurement). It already touched the threshold limit value (TLV). It is also about 3-12 times of environmental levels reported by HKEPD^{Note 1} in 2019 (Tsuen Wan District, Central & Western District).*

Note 1:

<http://www.aqhi.gov.hk/tc/sub-download/sub-air-quality-reports/dioxin2019.html>

On 10th January 2020, we got the following reply from the Administration:

ANSWER FROM POLYU

We refer to your email dated 7 January 2020 inquired about the test results on Cyanide and Dioxins. Below please find the concerned information for your perusal:

A. **Total Cyanide**

1. *The University had conducted assessments on the possible contamination of cyanide immediately after we took back our campus. In the context to study the potential tear gas impact, cyanide may be found as hydrogen cyanide gas or in the form of cyanide-containing particulates (which may settle as dust on surface, soil or water body).*
2. *Given that the hydrogen cyanide gas is lighter than air, it should have been dissipated in the air by the time we took back the campus, which is almost 2 weeks after the campus incident in mid-November. To confirm if this was the case, we tested the campus environment with Dräger Tubes in campus walk-through in late November. We could not detect any presence of cyanide in the air in these walk-through, which implied that the concentration of cyanide in the air was very minimal or close to zero. After consulting with the independent laboratory on the walk-through assessment results on the hydrogen cyanide gas, we are of the view that the testing of this contaminant in the air samples by the independent laboratory was not required. Our release of the second batch test results therefore had not included the testing result for cyanide.*
3. *The test results on the total cyanide in the soil, water and surface wipe samples are released on 28 December 2019. All the results are below the reporting/reference limits.*

*B. **Dioxins***

1. *The Environmental Protection Department of HKSAR Government has adopted the reference documents of Ontario, Canada and Japan for evaluation of air quality in Hong Kong. The criteria of dioxins adopted by AAQCs (Canada) is 0.1 pg TEQ/m³, while that for Japan is 0.6 pg TEQ/m³.*
2. *We would clarify that AAQCs is a desirable concentration of a contaminant in air and is used to assess general impact on air quality resulting from all sources of a contaminant. It is, by no means, to be taken as threshold limits. For details, please refer to website of [AAQCs](#).*

3. *Dioxins is a kind of environmental persistent organic pollutants (POPs) and is ubiquitous. It is formed by incineration of chlorine-containing substances. Majority of human exposure is through food, mainly meat and dairy products, fish and shellfish.*

4. *A chart and a table issued by Hong Kong EPD showing the dioxin levels in air from 2015 to 2019 at monitoring stations at Central/Western District and Tsing Yi is given below for quick reference. The data below clearly shows that there have been variations in the background levels of dioxins and occasions exceeding the reference level of 0.1pg TEQ/m³.*

a. A Chart showing the Ambient Dioxins Levels at Central/Western Monitoring Station by Hong Kong EPD

b. Summary of Ambient Dioxin Levels at Cheung Ching Estate, Tsing Yi by Hong Kong EPD

Year	Concentration (pg I-TEQ/m ³)										
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
1999										0.044	0.116
2000	0.076	0.055	0.038	0.038	0.038	0.036	0.039	0.039	0.103	0.058	0.070
2001	0.168	0.060	0.193	0.042	0.037	0.037	0.038	0.039	0.047	0.048	0.064
2002	0.080	0.036	0.035	0.040	0.041	0.038	0.045	0.037	0.035	0.054	0.039

2003	N/A	0.073	0.067	0.101	0.046	0.052	0.037	0.040	0.047	0.059	0.062
2004	0.111	0.057	0.063	0.046	0.038	0.037	0.038	0.038	0.091	0.092	0.061
2005	0.200	0.035	0.062	0.037	0.041	0.050	0.038	0.037	0.052	0.084	0.036
2006	0.049	0.080	0.112	0.091	0.038	0.037	0.038	0.073	0.050	0.050	0.080
2007	0.088	0.048	0.072	0.054	0.051	0.044	0.037	0.038	0.056	0.066	0.067
2008	0.062	0.080	0.068	0.089	0.063	0.0376	0.0395	0.040	0.037	0.060	0.103
2009	0.070	0.044	0.107	0.088	0.037	0.038	0.010	0.066	0.013	0.064	0.102
2010	0.049	0.016	0.010	0.019	0.021	0.222	0.037	0.010	0.010	N/A	N/A
2011	0.208	0.032	0.065	0.031	0.009	0.010	0.010	0.011	0.110	0.014	0.046
2012	0.075	0.073	0.077	0.036	0.001	0.011	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.049	0.013
2013	0.030	0.025	0.157	0.191	0.033	0.011	0.022	0.010	0.030	0.070	0.033
2014	0.118	0.066	0.044	0.018	0.012	0.015	0.022	0.014	0.070	0.037	0.024
2015	0.187	0.062	0.089	0.013	0.018	N/A	0.010	0.010	0.013	0.025	0.037
2016	0.109	0.036	0.010	0.012	0.015	0.038	0.009	0.010	0.010	0.146	0.017
2017	0.055	0.022	0.011	0.041	0.019	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.018	0.039
2018	0.057	0.016	0.028	0.011	0.010	0.010	0.009	0.009	0.009	0.010	0.010
2019	0.036	0.021	0.013	0.012	0.020	0.010	0.027	0.022	0.010	0.016	0.028

c. *The detailed results of each sampling locations (please see attached plan) are also given below for your quick reference.*

Sampling Location Reference No.	Dioxins in Air (pg I-TEQ/m³)
A1	0.074
A2	0.066
A3	0.055
A4	0.096
A5	0.067
A6	0.052
A7	0.050
A8	0.034
Average	0.062

5. The above test results for dioxins level in the air samples are expressed in Toxic Equivalent (TEQ) ranging from 0.034 – 0.096 picograms (pg) TEQ /m³, with an average value of 0.062 pg TEQ/m³. As the sample locations were evenly distributed within the campus, the lowest, the highest and the average value of the concentration level of dioxins in the air samples are below the two references levels adopted by EPD, we thus consider it is safe in terms of the concentration of dioxins.

We hope the above have addressed your queries.

On 13th January 2020, PUSA posted another email to Senior Management.

QUESTION FROM PUSA

Dear Seniors,

Since this morning, PUSA has got messages and feedback coming in – all from academic staff members – that they are very concerned with the turnstiles installed at campus entrances. Staff members are concerning particularly how the University will use the electronic record as this record is capturing their arrival and departure time.

In addition, PUSA understands that there is a simplified version for registration for visitors, but there are events/moments that staff members/departments may not be convenient to get the full name and email of the visitors, let alone email address is not required or owned by every individual to staff with. Please give clarifications at your earliest convenience. We need to inform staff members officially very soon.

Very much to our regret, PUSA has yet to receive any reply from Senior Management at the time of writing.

In the last couple of days, PUSA has got the following inquiries/views on the issue in relation to the recent installation of turnstiles on campus.

- a. The installation of the turnstiles in the current layout does not seem to be of temporary nature, and there is an impression of caging that needs to be noted.

- b. The purpose of asking people to scan out the turnstiles upon departure is entirely unnecessary as this must not for the purpose of security check.
- c. There has been measure of the air quality of the open campus, but has there been any measure on the indoor air quality?
- d. How safe is the water quality in campus from heat boilers at pantries of different departments/units that staff members may use directly when the water is from the water tubes instead of distilled water drinking machine?

We hope that Senior Management would soon give us a reply on these matters.

2. **Follow Up on the PBSRRS issue**

An invitation to all staff members from the Office of DP & Provost was sent out on 31 October 2019 for a briefing session n update of the Review of Pay Level, Benefits and Salary Review and Reward System (PBSRRS) of which the Task Force set up by PolyU Council had been working on since early 2019 and came up with a recommendation that PUSA was also being briefed. However, the Communication sessions scheduled to take place on 13th November could not materialize due to the PolyU Campus siege. PUSA has been receiving staff calls recently on the captioned matter, and she believes the Senior Management will resume this communication arrangement with staff members once the campus activity is back in full swing in February.

3. **An Invitation to the AGM of PUSA**

PUSA sent out a mail to all members on 13th November to call for the Annual General Meeting to take place on 28th November. That meeting was of course cancelled subsequently due to siege of PolyU campus by protesters. We are pleased to announce that the AGM 2019 would now be held on Thursday, 6

February 2020 at 12:45 pm in Room BC201. Agenda and other related documents will be released very soon. Even if you are not a PUSA member, you may attend the AGM by joining PUSA at the spot.

We take this opportunity to wish you a happy, successful and healthy Lunar New Year of the Rat.

PUSA Executive Council

22nd January 2020