

31 August 2014

## Disposal of Mooncakes Hits 10-Year Record Low

Environmental group Green Power saw an overall improvement on the issue of food waste in a recent study. This included the number of mooncakes discarded and the amount of food waste resulting from reunion dinners for the festivities, which had hit a record low. The study also found that about 20% of the respondents planned to purchase glow sticks. The average number of glow sticks discarded per family was about half box, each containing 100 sticks last year, which contributed to potential environmental pollution. Green Power urged the public to be aware of the problem of food waste and disposal of glow sticks during the Mid-Autumn Festival and put forward more environmental and traditional ways to celebrate Mid-Autumn Festival.

Today, **Green Power** released the results of the latest survey on “Consumption and Celebration Habits during Mid-Autumn Festival”. The average family interviewed discarded 0.63 of a mooncake last year. This figure, the lowest since the survey began in 2004, is encouraging. **Mr. Henry Lui**, Senior Conservation Manager of Green Power, remarked that even though a family may discard only a small quantity of mooncakes, the accumulated amount should not be taken lightly due to a high overall demand for mooncakes. In addition, the survey showed that people purchased mooncakes primarily as gifts for others; yet at the same time a large number of people discarded excessive mooncakes that they received as gifts. **Mr. Lui** recommended that alternative ways of celebration can be practised, such as having reunion dinner, moon watching and paying cordial visits to each other, which not only save money but increases the festive spirit. Furthermore, the elders in the family normally receive a great number of mooncakes, therefore, family members should better coordinate before giving mooncakes.

For reunion dinners during Mid-Autumn Festival, the survey results showed that the amount of food waste has continued to decline for families interviewed, an indication of improvement indeed. Still, half of the respondents had leftover food waste, a majority of which was meat. **Mr. Lui** pointed out that many families purposely prepared more food than needed during festival celebration. Hence the problem is avoidable. He further recommended people to consider having more vegetables than meat, as the production of meat contributes carbon emission three times than is needed to produce fruits and vegetables. It is also a Chinese tradition to eat according to the seasons. With the harvest of fruits and vegetables in Autumn, reducing the amount of meat for reunion dinners during the Mid-Autumn festival is in line with tradition as well as being healthy and minimizing the amount of food waste.

**Mr. Henry Lui** also drew special attention towards to the problem of glow sticks. The study revealed that around 25% of the families interviewed bought glow sticks for Mid-Autumn Festival. In the past year, each family on average disposed 43 glow sticks. Due to their short-life, disposable nature and toxic chemicals contained within them, it is recommended that people should refrain from buying them as far as possible.

The survey results were released today at the 22nd annual “Clean Up the World in Hong Kong”. The ceremony was organized by Green Power and supported by **HK Electric** for the 20th consecutive year. Officiating guests were: **Ms Anissa Wong, JP, Director of Environmental Protection**, Teachers and students of **S.K.H. Ching Shan Primary School**, **Mr. Francis Cheng, Director and General Manager (Generation) of HK Electric**, and **Dr Eric Tsang, Chairman of Green Power**.

With Mid-Autumn Festival approaching, the organisers held the “Learning from Traditional Wisdom and Enjoy an Eco-friendly Mid-Autumn Festival” campaign that provides five different ways to have a traditional and environmentally friendly Mid-Autumn Festival. Participating guests at the ceremony also shared their tips on a green Mid-Autumn festival.

**Ms Anissa Wong, JP, Director of the Environmental Protection Department**, commented that purchasing mooncakes for many people is only a habit and may not be necessary. Excessive purchasing of mooncakes will only produce waste. By simply visiting family and friends during the festival is a better way to fulfil the meaning of reunion in the Mid-Autumn Festival.

**Mr. Francis Cheng, Director and General Manager (Generation) of HK Electric**, suggested that seasonal vegetarian dishes may be the highlight of reunion dinners for the Mid-Autumn Festival, as it falls on the 15th day of the lunar month and traditionally many people prepare vegetarian foods for the day. This way we follow traditional wisdom while reducing carbon emission relating to meat production.

**Dr Eric Tsang, Chairman of Green Power**, noticed that many people like to celebrate Mid-Autumn Festival with barbeque activities, which contributes to various environmental problems such as large amounts of food waste, disposable cutlery, and carbon emissions. Therefore, he recommended that barbecues be avoided and replaced by lantern carnivals which are traditional in celebrating the festival.

A group of teachers and students from **S.K.H. Ching Shan Primary School** also attended the ceremony. They were joined by more than 30 volunteers from HK Electric to promote and encourage members of the public to commit to “Celebrate Green Mid-Autumn Festival with Traditional Wisdom”. **Lui Chun Sing**, a primary six student already planned a strategy on promoting the message. “I have already promoted the message to my father and mother. Our family will practice the five eco-friendly-Mid- Autumn Festival actions. I will lead by example and encourage others to join in these actions,” he said.

### **“Celebrate Green Mid-Autumn Festival with Traditional Wisdom”**

The “Celebrate Green Mid-Autumn Festival with Traditional Wisdom” commitment to action was officially launched today. The aim is to provide people with environmentally-friendly ways to celebrate Mid-Autumn Festival, which would be both easy and traditional. By first focusing on foods and celebration activities during the Mid-Autumn Festival and reducing waste from the source, it will relieve the pressure on the landfill sites. By committing online to “Celebrate Green Mid-Autumn Festival with Traditional Wisdom” one may receive a food bag sealing clip.

“Celebrate Green Mid-Autumn Festival with Traditional Wisdom” commitment to action : [www.greenpower.org.hk/cuw](http://www.greenpower.org.hk/cuw) ( webpage also includes suggestions for waste reduction for other festivals )

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### **“Clean Up the World”**

“Clean Up the World” is an international activity organised by the United Nations. This annual event is now held in more than 130 cities around the globe with over 35 million participants. Green Power is the official organiser of the event in Hong Kong. Since 2004, the theme of “Reducing Festival Waste and Enjoying Greener Festivals”, has been adopted to encourage the public to minimise waste and harm to the environment and the Earth while celebrating a greener festival. A “Greener Festivals” website has been established to provide information and tips on festival waste reduction. (Website: [www.greenpower.org.hk/cuw](http://www.greenpower.org.hk/cuw))

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