

\$450m cash incentive for greener buildings

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Building owners are to be encouraged to make their properties more energy efficient via a new HK\$450 million government fund launched yesterday.

Environmental and Conservation Fund chairman David Lung Ping-ye said more than 1,600 projects will be subsidized, creating business and job opportunities in electrical, mechanical, building services and environmental engineering.

Lung, who is also a professor of architecture at Hong Kong University, said the city's commercial and residential buildings consume 90 percent of total electricity generated and improving their energy efficiency will significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The funding scheme provides incentives to owners to conduct energy-cum-carbon audits and energy efficiency projects.

Funding will be capped at HK\$150,000 for audits and HK\$500,000 for energy efficiency projects in individual buildings.

Applications for a cluster of buildings will have their subsidies set at half of the total approved cost but this will not be subject to a ceiling.

Friends of the Earth director Edwin Lau Che-feng said electricity use could be cut by 10 per-

cent to 15 percent, saving 3.56 billion kilowatt-hours annually along with 2.67 million tonnes of carbon dioxide, or nearly 10 percent of total emissions, if all buildings complied with the current voluntary energy-saving measures.

Lau said mandatory building energy codes should be brought in this year, adding that retrofits will allow building managers to recoup 20 percent of energy costs over a building's life span.

Electrical and Mechanical Services Department chief engineer for energy efficiency Li Kwok-keung said the response from the private sector to the voluntary scheme was not satisfactory as nearly three-quarters of the 867 buildings registered last year were from the public sector.

The mandatory scheme being mulled will apply to all new commercial buildings as well as common areas in residential and industrial buildings.

Participating buildings will be issued with a certificate which will have to be renewed every 10 years.

The scheme will not apply to 40,000 existing buildings until they are retrofitted, while commercial buildings of more than 499 square meters of floor space will have to be audited.

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