

China giant offers to help clean HK pellet spill

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Taxis drive past a broken umbrella among tree branches in the aftermath of Typhoon Vicente in Hong Kong on July 24. Chinese oil major Sinopec on Thursday offered to help pay to clean up tonnes of plastic pellets that have fouled Hong Kong beaches since a spill at sea during a typhoon two weeks ago.

Chinese oil major Sinopec on Thursday offered to help pay to clean up tonnes of plastic pellets that have fouled Hong Kong beaches since a spill at sea during a typhoon two weeks ago.

The Hong Kong-listed company said it would set aside HK\$10 million (\$1.29 million) for the clean-up, after 150 tonnes of the tiny round pellets in six containers were washed off a [cargo ship](#) during Typhoon Vicente.

The pellets, owned by Sinopec and known as "nurdles", are used to make

plastic products and are not believed to be toxic.

But environmentalists fear they could absorb [toxic chemicals](#) or kill marine life that mistakes them for food.

Some of the pellets have been found in the guts of fish farmed in Hong Kong, sparking concerns about the safety of consuming locally-produced seafood.

"All these pellets have passed [safety inspections](#) and are highly stable," Sinopec spokesman Lu Dapeng told reporters, downplaying environmental concerns.

"Sinopec suffered from damage -- we are also a victim," he added, referring to the storm.

He said the company would "pay for the necessary costs and expenses" regardless of whether it could be legally blamed for the spill.

Although Sinopec owned the pellets it has not admitted liability. China [Shipping Container](#) Lines reportedly leased the [cargo vessel](#), the Yong Xin Jie 1, which was transporting the pellets when the typhoon struck.

"We have not breached any Hong Kong [environmental law](#)," Sinopec Hong Kong General Manager Li Jianguo said.

The company has sent staff to join local volunteers who have been scouring the territory's coastline, picking up the pellets by hand.

Hong Kong chief Leung Chun-ying said the government would take action against any party found responsible for the mess.

"We will go after the responsible company or organisation," he said.

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