

KERATAN AKHBAR

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One in every 50 people could be hoarders, says expert

IPOH

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ONE in every 50 people are likely to be hoarders, a recycling organisation expert said.

Koperasi Alam Hijau Perak Bhd (Kohijau) chairman Assoc Prof Dr Richard Ng said during a door-to-door campaign on dengue prevention, Kohijau members had seen many cases of hoarders.

Ng, who is also Ipoh City Watch president, said according to statistics, almost one in every 50 people is a hoarder or display tendencies to be a compulsive hoarder.

“Local authorities need to step in after identifying people who are suspected hoarders because of the danger they pose to themselves and others,” he said.

Ng said hoarders must be handled with care, especially by qualified counsellors and psychiatrists.

He said a supportive environment was required to encourage family members to seek help and treat them.

“Hoarders do not like people to take their possessions or clean up their environment unless they see the benefits of doing it.

“The Kohijau-iCycle recycling reward point system is a method that can help society embrace the 3R (reduce, reuse, recycle) culture, and prevent them from hoarding as it encourages people to discard unwanted items and reward them for it,” he added.

Ng said hoarding usually runs in families largely because of psychological problems.

He said many hoarders feared making wrong decisions about what to keep



A house where Ipoh City Council helped clear the rubbish. — filepic

and discard.

He added that compulsive hoarding in its worst forms could cause fires, unsanitary conditions (infestations of rats and cockroaches), and other health and safety hazards.

“If we observe people who hoard, they tend to hold onto a large number of items that most people consider useless or worthless.

“Some examples are old catalogues, magazines and newspapers, worn-out cooking utensils and clothes as well as items that are broken and rubbish.

“Their homes are cluttered to the point where they may even be inaccessible,” said Ng, adding that this could cause illness, distress and impairment.

He said hoarders would not allow visitors into their homes, making it difficult to carry out repair works.

He said it was common for hoarders to

argue with family members regarding clutter.

“Such hoarders can be treated through cognitive behaviour therapy, which may help them change their behaviour,” he added.

Ng said hoarding was an act of compulsive purchasing, acquiring, searching and saving items that have little or no value.

He said the behaviour usually had harmful effects – emotional, physical, social, financial and ever legal – for a hoarder and family members.

Many people with hoarding disorder also experience other health disorders such as depression, anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder and hyperactivity, which may develop along with other mental illnesses such as dementia and schizophrenia.

“The compulsion to hoard often starts during childhood or teenage years, but it usually becomes more severe in adulthood,” he added.