

Labour Department to hold occupational health public talks

The Labour Department (LD) will hold a public talk entitled "Health hazards of hot environment at work" on April 11 (Thursday). The talk, designed for workers in hot environments to enhance their awareness of heat stroke prevention, will include symptoms of heat stroke, its first aid treatment and preventive measures. It will be given by the LD's occupational health nurse and occupational hygienist at 6.30pm in Activity Room 1, G/F, Hong Kong Central Library, 66 Causeway Road, Causeway Bay.

The LD will hold another talk entitled "Occupational safety and health (OSH) for confined space workers" on April 25 (Thursday). To enhance workers' OSH awareness in confined spaces, the talk will explain the related OSH hazards as well as their preventive measures. It will be given by the LD's occupational hygienist, occupational safety officer and occupational health nurse at 3pm in the Lecture Hall, Hong Kong Space Museum, 10 Salisbury Road, Tsim Sha Tsui.

Both talks will be conducted in Cantonese. Admission is free. For enquiries or registration, please call 2852 4040.

Illegal worker jailed

A Pakistani illegal worker holding a recognisance form was jailed by Shatin Magistrates' Courts on April 4.

During joint operations codenamed "Sahara" conducted by the Immigration Department (ImmD) and the Hong Kong Police Force on January 9, one male Pakistani illegal worker, aged 43, was arrested by enforcement officers in Mong Kok. When intercepted he was conveying goods. Upon identity checking, he produced for inspection a recognisance form issued by the ImmD, which prohibits him from taking employment. Further investigation revealed that he was a non-refoulement claimant. One employer suspected of employing the illegal worker was arrested and the investigation is ongoing.

The illegal worker was charged at Shatin Magistrates' Courts on April 4 with taking employment after landing in Hong Kong unlawfully and remaining in Hong Kong without the authority of the Director of Immigration or while being a person in respect of whom a removal order or deportation order was in force. After trial, he was sentenced to 22 months and two weeks' imprisonment.

The ImmD spokesman warned that, as stipulated in section 38AA of the

Immigration Ordinance, illegal immigrants or people who are the subject of a removal order or a deportation order are prohibited from taking any employment, whether paid or unpaid, or establishing or joining in any business. Offenders are liable upon conviction to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and up to three years' imprisonment. The Court of Appeal has issued a guideline ruling that a sentence of 15 months' imprisonment should be applied in such cases.

The spokesman reiterated that it is a serious offence to employ people who are not lawfully employable. The maximum penalty is imprisonment for three years and a fine of \$350,000. The High Court has laid down sentencing guidelines that the employer of an illegal worker should be given an immediate custodial sentence. According to the court sentencing, employers must take all practicable steps to determine whether a person is lawfully employable prior to employment. Apart from inspecting a prospective employee's identity card, the employer has the explicit duty to make enquiries regarding the person and ensure that the answers would not cast any reasonable doubt concerning the lawful employability of the person. The court will not accept failure to do so as a defence in proceedings. It is also an offence if an employer fails to inspect the job seeker's valid travel document if the job seeker does not have a Hong Kong permanent identity card. The maximum penalty for failing to inspect such a document is imprisonment for one year and a fine of \$150,000.

Under the existing mechanism, the ImmD will, as a standard procedure, conduct initial screening of vulnerable persons, including illegal workers, illegal immigrants, sex workers and foreign domestic helpers, who are arrested during any operation with a view to ascertaining whether they are trafficking in persons (TIP) victims. When any TIP indicator is revealed in the initial screening, the officers will conduct a full debriefing and identification by using a standardised checklist to ascertain the presence of TIP elements, such as threat and coercion in the recruitment phase, and the nature of exploitation. Identified TIP victims will be provided with various forms of support and assistance, including urgent interference, medical services, counselling, shelter, temporary accommodation and other supporting services. The ImmD calls on TIP victims to report crimes to the relevant departments.

EMSD announces latest sampling results for legionella at fresh water cooling towers

The Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) today (April 8) announced that the department tested 35 water samples collected from cooling

towers in 34 buildings in its routine inspections in March this year. None of them was detected to have a total legionella count at or above the upper threshold, which is 1 000 colony-forming units per millilitre. The latest statistics are set out in Annex 1.

The EMSD also announced the locations of buildings which were served with nuisance notices during the preceding three-month period as the total legionella count was found in the fresh water cooling towers to be equal to or above the upper threshold. Details can be found in Annex 2. The EMSD publishes the latest statistics of the above information on a half-monthly basis on its website

(www.emsd.gov.hk/en/other_regulatory_services/cooling_towers/water_sampling/index.html).

The EMSD reminds the owners of fresh water cooling towers that they have the responsibility to design, operate and maintain cooling towers properly. They should arrange regular inspections, timely maintenance and periodic testing of the water quality in their cooling towers in accordance with the Code of Practice for Fresh Water Cooling Towers issued by the department to prevent the proliferation of legionella.

Lifesaving services suspended at Pui O Beach

Attention TV/radio announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible and repeat it at regular intervals:

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (April 8) that due to an insufficient number of lifeguards on duty, the lifesaving services at Pui O Beach in Islands District are suspended until further notice.

First aid service will be maintained at the beach.

Key statistics on service demand of A&E Departments and occupancy rates in

public hospitals

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

During the winter surge, the Hospital Authority is closely monitoring the service demand of Accident and Emergency Departments and the occupancy rate in public hospitals. Key service statistics are being issued daily for public information. Details are in the appended table.