

Operation of HKeToll at Cross-Harbour Tunnel generally smooth

The Transport Department (TD) said today (July 24) that the operation of the HKeToll has been generally smooth since its implementation at the Cross-Harbour Tunnel from 5am yesterday (July 23).

The TD's Emergency Transport Co-ordination Centre has been closely monitoring the traffic situation at the Cross-Harbour Tunnel. The overall traffic flow has been smooth in general. During today's morning peak hours, the traffic queue at Princess Margaret Road towards Hong Kong Island is at the petrol station near the Oi Man Estate, which is similar to that before the implementation of the HKeToll. With less lane-cutting activities at the tunnel portal, the driving experience is smoother than before, and generally motorists can adapt to the new traffic arrangements.

At present, 97 per cent of vehicles are issued vehicle tags. From 0.00am to 5.30pm today, a total of about 73 000 vehicles passed through the Cross-Harbour Tunnel. Among them, about 90 per cent of the vehicles were detected with vehicle tags installed, and about 70 per cent of the vehicles used an automatic payment means. With the progressive implementation of the HKeToll in government toll tunnels, the TD once again appeals to vehicle owners who have received vehicle tags to complete the three steps for the HKeToll service as soon as possible: (1) install a vehicle tag, (2) open an HKeToll account and (3) set up an automatic payment means, so as to fully enjoy the convenience of the HKeToll.

The TD reminds that vehicle owners must pay the toll within 14 business days after passing through the tunnel. He/she can log on the HKeToll website (hketoll.gov.hk) or mobile app to check the outstanding toll and pay, either by credit card or by following the instructions to generate a QR code to either pay via the Faster Payment System or at 7-Eleven convenience stores by cash.

The HKeToll website provides a video to guide vehicle owners on how to set up the automatic payment means and pay outstanding tolls online. Payments of outstanding tolls can also be made at the four customer service centres and four service outlets. If vehicle owners have any enquiries about setting up an automatic payment means, paying an outstanding toll or the HKeToll, they should call the 24-hour customer service hotline at 3853 7333 or visit the customer service centres, service outlets or consultation counters at designated MTR stations and Home Affairs Enquiry Centres in the District Offices. The staff will provide appropriate assistance. The locations and service hours of the above-mentioned facilities is at the Annex.

Following the Cross-Harbour Tunnel, the HKeToll will be implemented at the the Western Harbour Crossing and the Eastern Harbour Crossing in August. Details and exact dates will be announced separately.

Enhancement of Elderly Health Care Voucher Scheme to allow shared use of health care vouchers between spouses to launch this Friday

The Department of Health (DH) today (July 24) announced that with effect from this Friday (July 28), eligible Hong Kong elderly persons can share-use health care vouchers (Vouchers) with their spouse. In addition, starting from the same date, the Elderly Health Care Voucher Scheme (EHVS) will implement the use of electronic consent (e-consent) and introduce real-time short messaging service (SMS) to provide further convenience to elderly persons using the Vouchers.

The Chief Executive announced in the 2022 Policy Address a series of enhancement measures of the EHVS, including allowing couples to share-use the Vouchers. At present, over 950 000 elderly persons aged 65 and above in Hong Kong are married, and they will be able to benefit from this new share-use arrangement.

In firming up the arrangements of the plan, one of the key principles adopted by the Government is to provide convenience to elderly persons. Elderly couples (both parties aged 65 or above) who intend to share-use the Vouchers are not required to register in advance for pairing up their accounts. When either party of an elderly couple uses the Voucher to pay for healthcare services, both of them only need to attend the practice of any healthcare service provider participating in the EHVS for pairing up their Voucher accounts. During the registration process, elderly persons are not required to provide any documentary proof of spousal relationship. However, they need to declare their spousal relationship and give consent to share-use their Vouchers to ensure their eligibility when registering for pairing up accounts in front of a healthcare service provider. Elderly persons will be directly requested by the Government to provide supporting documents for verification when necessary later. Upon completion of registration for pairing the accounts, there is no further need to register for pairing accounts again when Vouchers are used.

If either party of an elderly couple is unable to register in person due to exceptional circumstances (e.g. immobility or being bedridden), they need to complete and sign the "Consent of Sharing Health Care Vouchers between Voucher Recipients in Spousal Relationship" (downloadable from the EHVS website (www.hcv.gov.hk), which have to be submitted by the elderly person attending a healthcare service provider's practice by bringing along a copy of a valid Hong Kong identity card (HKIC) (or Certificate of Exemption (CoE), if applicable) of the spouse who is unable to attend to complete the

registration process.

Following the completion of account pairing, the elderly person and his/her spouse can, upon exhaustion of his/her own Voucher account balance, use the Voucher balance in his/her spouse's account. Every time spouse's Vouchers are used, the elderly person is required to provide a copy of the latest HKIC (or CoE, if applicable) of the spouse to the healthcare service provider for verification.

To safeguard the interest of both parties with accounts paired, an elderly person and his/her spouse with the account successfully paired will each receive an SMS at his/her designated contact mobile phone number to ensure that both of them are aware that their accounts have been paired. Whenever their Voucher balance has been used by his/her spouse in future, they will also receive SMS notifications.

Apart from allowing the use of Vouchers between spouses, from the same date, the EHVS will also launch the use of e-consent to replace the previous paper-based consent to confirm the agreement of using Vouchers. When elderly persons use Vouchers to pay for service fees, they only need to insert their HKIC into the smart identity card reader for expressing agreement to the use of the relevant Voucher amount. They are no longer required to sign on the paper consent form. All elderly persons using Vouchers can provide a local mobile phone number which can receive an SMS to the healthcare service provider. When Vouchers are used to pay for healthcare services, the system will send a real-time SMS notification (including the Voucher amount used) to provide extra security.

A spokesman for the DH reminded, "The EHVS aims to provide convenience and subsidy to elderly persons to receive private primary healthcare services that best suit their health needs in terms of disease prevention and health management. In share-using Vouchers between spouses, elderly persons must consider their own needs and should fully communicate with their spouse to make thorough plans on how to make the best use of their Vouchers after pairing up their accounts. Moreover, Vouchers cannot be used solely for purchasing goods, medication, medical equipment and products, or redeemed for cash."

To ensure the proper use of public money, the DH will conduct regular or sampling checks in accordance with the monitoring mechanism. All suspected cases of false declaration about a spousal relationship will be strictly dealt with and referred to law enforcement agencies for investigation. Making a false declaration is a criminal offence and offenders are liable to a fine or imprisonment upon conviction.

The spokesman added, "The DH and healthcare service providers will not, in relation to the use of Vouchers (including Voucher account pairing), ask for any bank account details (including passwords) of the elderly persons via phone calls or SMS, nor will they ask the elderly persons to click on any website links. Elderly persons must stay vigilant against scams."

To facilitate understanding of the procedures for pairing of elderly

couple's Voucher accounts, the DH has held a total of 10 briefing sessions from July 19 to 24 for healthcare service providers, and explained to relevant healthcare personnel the relevant measures and answered their queries.

Members of the public may refer to the EHVS website (www.hcv.gov.hk) for more information, or call the EHVS hotline (2838 2311) for enquiries.

CHP closely monitors human case of avian influenza A(H5N6) in Mainland

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (July 24) closely monitoring a human case of avian influenza A(H5N6) in the Mainland, and again urged the public to maintain strict personal, food and environmental hygiene both locally and during travel.

The case involves a 64-year-old male living in Guilin, Guangxi, who had raised domestic poultry before the onset of symptoms. He developed symptoms on July 3 and was admitted for treatment on the following day. He is in serious condition.

From 2014 to date, 85 human cases of avian influenza A(H5N6) have been reported by Mainland health authorities.

"All novel influenza A infections, including H5N6, are notifiable infectious diseases in Hong Kong," a spokesman for the CHP said.

Travellers to the Mainland or other affected areas must avoid visiting wet markets, live poultry markets or farms. They should be alert to the presence of backyard poultry when visiting relatives and friends. They should also avoid purchasing live or freshly slaughtered poultry, and avoid touching poultry/birds or their droppings. They should strictly observe personal and hand hygiene when visiting any place with live poultry.

Travellers returning from affected areas should consult a doctor promptly if symptoms develop, and inform the doctor of their travel history for prompt diagnosis and treatment of potential diseases. It is essential to tell the doctor if they have seen any live poultry during travel, which may imply possible exposure to contaminated environments. This will enable the doctor to assess the possibility of avian influenza and arrange necessary investigations and appropriate treatment in a timely manner.

While local surveillance, prevention and control measures are in place, the CHP will remain vigilant and work closely with the World Health Organization and relevant health authorities to monitor the latest developments.

The public should maintain strict personal, hand, food and environmental hygiene and take heed of the advice below when handling poultry:

- Avoid touching poultry, birds, animals or their droppings;
- When buying live chickens, do not touch them and their droppings. Do not blow at their bottoms. Wash eggs with detergent if soiled with faecal matter and cook and consume the eggs immediately. Always wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after handling chickens and eggs;
- Eggs should be cooked well until the white and yolk become firm. Do not eat raw eggs or dip cooked food into any sauce with raw eggs. Poultry should be cooked thoroughly. If there is pinkish juice running from the cooked poultry or the middle part of its bone is still red, the poultry should be cooked again until fully done;
- Wash hands frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes, before handling food or eating, and after going to the toilet, touching public installations or equipment such as escalator handrails, elevator control panels or door knobs, or when hands are dirtied by respiratory secretions after coughing or sneezing; and
- Wear a mask if fever or respiratory symptoms develop, when going to a hospital or clinic, or while taking care of patients with fever or respiratory symptoms.

The public may visit the CHP's pages for more information: the [avian influenza](#) page, the weekly [Avian Influenza Report, global statistics and affected areas](#) of avian influenza, the [Facebook Page](#) and the [YouTube Channel](#).

[Update on cases of Legionnaires' disease](#)

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (July 24) reported the latest number of cases of Legionnaires' disease (LD), and stressed the importance of using and maintaining properly designed man-made water systems, adding that susceptible groups should strictly observe relevant precautions.

From July 16 to 22, five LD cases were reported:

1. A male patient, aged 73 with underlying illnesses, who lives in a village house on Sai Kung Road, Sai Kung. He had a travel history during the incubation period;
2. A male patient, aged 81 with underlying illnesses, who lives in Block 12, Richland Gardens, Kowloon Bay. It was classified as a community-acquired case;
3. A male patient, aged 71 with underlying illnesses, who had been to

Macao during the incubation period and was classified as an imported case;

4. A male patient, aged 64 with good past health, who lives in Block 8, Greenfield Garden, Tsing Yi. It was classified as a community-acquired case; and
5. A male patient, aged 74 with underlying illnesses, who lives in Pittosporum Court, New Town Plaza Phase 3, Sha Tin. It was classified as a community-acquired case.

"Epidemiological investigations are ongoing to identify potential sources of infection, high-risk exposure and clusters, if any," a spokesman for the CHP said.

As of July 22, 59 LD cases had been reported this year. In 2022 and 2021, there were 80 and 69 cases respectively.

"Men, people aged over 50, smokers, alcoholics and persons with weakened immunity are more susceptible to LD. Some situations may also increase the risk of infection, including poor maintenance of water systems leading to stagnant water; living in areas with old water systems, cooling towers or fountains; using electric water heaters, whirlpools and spas or hot water spring spas; and recent stays in hotels or vessels," the spokesman said.

Legionellae are found in various environmental settings and grow well in warm water (20 to 45 degrees Celsius). They can be found in aqueous environments such as water tanks, hot and cold water systems, cooling towers, whirlpools and spas, water fountains and home apparatus that support breathing. People may become infected when they breathe in contaminated droplets (aerosols) and mist generated by artificial water systems, or when handling garden soil, compost and potting mixes.

Immunocompromised persons should:

- Use sterile or boiled water for drinking, tooth brushing and mouth rinsing;
- Avoid using humidifiers, or other mist- or aerosol-generating devices. A shower may also generate small aerosols; and
- If using humidifiers, or other mist- or aerosol-generating devices, fill the water tank with only sterile or cooled freshly boiled water, and not water directly from the tap. Also, clean and maintain humidifiers/devices regularly according to manufacturers' instructions. Never leave stagnant water in a humidifier/device. Empty the water tank, wipe all surfaces dry, and change the water daily.

â€‹The public should observe the health advice below:

- Observe personal hygiene;
- Do not smoke and avoid alcohol consumption;
- Strainers in water taps and shower heads should be inspected, cleaned,

descaled and disinfected regularly or at a frequency recommended by the manufacturer;

- If a fresh-water plumbing system is properly maintained, it is not necessary to install domestic water filters. Use of water filters is not encouraged as clogging occurs easily, which can promote growth of microorganisms. In case water filters are used, the pore size should be 0.2 micrometres (μm) and the filter needs to be changed periodically according to the manufacturer's recommendations;
- Drain and clean water tanks of buildings at least quarterly;
- Drain or purge for at least one minute infrequently used water outlets (e.g. water taps, shower heads and hot water outlets) and stagnant points of the pipework weekly or before use;
- Seek and follow doctors' professional advice regarding the use and maintenance of home respiratory devices and use only sterile water (not distilled or tap water) to clean and fill the reservoir. Clean and maintain the device regularly according to the manufacturer's instructions. After cleaning/disinfection, rinse the device with sterile water, cooled freshly boiled water or water filtered with 0.2 μm filters. Never leave stagnant water in the device. Empty the water tank, keep all surfaces dry, and change the water daily; and
- When handling garden soil, compost and potting mixes:
 1. Wear gloves and a face mask;
 2. Water gardens and compost gently using low pressure;
 3. Open composted potting mixes slowly and make sure the opening is directed away from the face;
 4. Wet the soil to reduce dust when potting plants; and
 5. Avoid working in poorly ventilated places such as enclosed greenhouses.

â€‹The public may visit the CHP's [LD page](#), the [Code of Practice for Prevention of LD](#) and the [Housekeeping Guidelines for Cold and Hot Water Systems for Building Management](#) of the Prevention of LD Committee, and the CHP's [risk-based strategy](#) for prevention and control of LD.

Public housing resident convicted by court for making false statement

A spokesman for the Housing Department (HD) today (July 24) reminded residents of public rental housing (PRH) estates to declare truthfully their income and assets.

A PRH resident living at Choi Ming Court in Tseung Kwan O declared in a 2022 Income and Assets Declaration Form that he did not own any land. Subsequent investigation revealed that this resident owned a piece of land in the New Territories with estimated market value of \$2,000,000 at the material time.

This resident was prosecuted for neglecting to furnish information specified in the declaration form, contrary to Section 27(a) of the Housing Ordinance. He was convicted by the presiding magistrate in the Kwun Tong Magistrates' Courts today. Given the gravity of the offence, the defendant was sentenced to two months' imprisonment (suspended for 12 months). This resident has moved out and been deleted from the tenancy of the PRH unit.

The spokesman said that households living in PRH should complete their Income and Assets Declaration Forms accurately, as doing so provides the foundation for the assessment of rent and their eligibilities for continuing residence. Before furnishing particulars specified in the requisition required by the Hong Kong Housing Authority, households should read the content and completion guidelines of the Income and Assets Declaration Forms carefully and compute their income and assets in accordance with the methods specified. Otherwise, they may be prosecuted for making a false statement knowingly, contrary to Section 26(1)(a) of the Housing Ordinance (if convicted, the maximum penalty is a \$50,000 fine and imprisonment for six months), or be prosecuted for neglecting to furnish information as specified in a declaration form, contrary to Section 27(a) of the Housing Ordinance (if convicted, the maximum penalty is a \$25,000 fine and imprisonment for three months). The HD will take action to recover the undercharged rent incurred due to the inaccurate information or even recover their PRH units.