

Government follows up on positive results of sewage surveillance and appeals to residents to undergo virus testing

The Government announced today (September 21) that in order to fight the coronavirus epidemic, the Environmental Protection Department and the Drainage Services Department have been collecting sewage samples for virus testing in all districts, and had detected positive results in some areas, indicating that there may be hidden cases in the premises within these areas.

Rapid test

As regards positive sewage testing results with relatively high viral loads in the following areas, the Housing Department and the respective District Offices will commence distributing about 210 000 sets of the COVID-19 rapid antigen test (RAT) kits to residents, cleaning workers and property management staff working in the following areas for them to take the test on their own, in order to help identify infected persons:

- Southern District – Baguio Villa, Residence Bel-Air and Ap Lei Chau Estate
- North District – Wealthy Villas, Century Court, Fortune House, Parkford Garden, Magdalene Garden, Royal Knoll, Cheong Shing Court and Choi Yuen Estate
- Eastern District – Lok Hin Terrace, Walton Estate, King Tsui Court, Yee Tsui Court, Yen Lok Building, Gold Mine Building, Winner Centre, Kin Yip Court, Moon Wah Building, Man Wah Building, Wan Tsui Estate, Chai Wan Estate and Lin Tsui Estate

Members of the public may refer to (www.coronavirus.gov.hk/rat/eng/rat.html) for enquiries relating to the use of the RAT kits.

When using an RAT kit, please pay attention to and follow the instructions from the manufacturer to perform the test and read the result properly. It is advisable to record the displayed result by taking a photo immediately after reading. Users should wash their hands before and after performing the tests, and avoid placing non-essential items within the specimen collection area. After completing the test, wrap and seal all components of the test kit carefully and dispose properly. If the household environment is contaminated during the specimen collecting process, disinfection should be conducted with 1 in 49 diluted bleach solution or 70 per cent alcohol.

People who obtained a positive result through an RAT for the first time can report via the online platform "Declaration System for individuals tested positive for COVID-19 using Rapid Antigen Test" (www.chp.gov.hk/ratp). If individuals encounter difficulties using the online platform, they can call the automated system at 183 6119 to register their identification document and telephone number. The Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health will contact the relevant person later to finish the report procedure.

Government announces latest situation of fresh food supply from Mainland

A Government spokesman announced today (September 21) that the supply of fresh food from the Mainland yesterday (September 20) was sufficient and stable.

According to the latest information, the quantity of vegetables supplied from the Mainland to Hong Kong yesterday (as of midnight) by land and water transportation was about 2 600 tonnes, comparable to the average daily supply from the Mainland on a normal day. The volume of vegetables sold through the wholesale markets of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) and the Vegetable Marketing Organization was about 779 tonnes. The average wholesale prices of choi sum and pak choi stood at \$5.90 and \$6.20 per catty respectively yesterday. The supply of eggs to the wholesale market remained steady, with the average daily supply standing at over 3.1 million for the past week, comparable to the average daily supply on a normal day last year.

The total supply of chilled pork from the Mainland yesterday was over 33 tonnes. The supply of live pigs was plentiful.

The supply of chilled poultry from the Mainland was over 130 000 head yesterday, and over 8 000 live chickens were slaughtered locally. The supply was abundant.

Regarding the rice supply, in compliance with the requirement by the Government, stockholders of rice have to maintain the reserve stock of rice at a level sufficient for consumption by the local population for 15 days. The trade generally stocks double the required amount, which is sufficient for one month's consumption by Hong Kong citizens. In recent years, the import and consumption of rice in Hong Kong has stood at a steady level of around 320 000 to 330 000 tonnes per year. The import quantity (including reserve stock) as of end-August 2022 was 27 100 tonnes. Suppliers also maintain a reserve for food that can be stored, such as frozen meat, for around three months' stock generally.

The Government will continue to maintain close liaison with the Mainland authorities and major food suppliers to ensure a stable food supply.

The AFCD updates and publishes the fresh food supply information daily. Members of the public may visit the AFCD website for updates on daily supplies and wholesale prices of fresh food (www.afcd.gov.hk/english/agriculture/agr_fresh/agr_fresh.html).

Monkeypox Vaccination Programme to commence in October

The Department of Health (DH) today (September 21) announced that the Monkeypox Vaccination Programme for high-risk groups will commence on October 5 and booking will open from October 3.

Following an imported case of monkeypox recorded earlier in September, the Government has activated the Alert level of the Preparedness and Response Plan for Monkeypox (the Plan), reflecting a low immediate health impact caused by monkeypox on the local population.

While the Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases and the Scientific Committee on Emerging and Zoonotic Diseases (JSC) under the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the DH do not recommend a mass monkeypox vaccination programme, the JSC updated its [consensus interim recommendations](#) on September 15 and recommended, among others, the use of third-generation vaccine for post-exposure prophylaxis for contacts of confirmed cases as well as pre-exposure vaccination for individuals at high risk of exposure.

Under the programme, the following high-risk target groups can receive monkeypox vaccination on a voluntary basis:

1. Individuals with high risk sexual practices, e.g. multiple sexual partners, sex workers, history of sexually transmitted infection within the past 12 months;
2. Healthcare workers responsible for caring of patients with confirmed monkeypox;
3. Laboratory personnel working with zoonotic pox viruses; and
4. Animal care personnel with high risk of exposure in case of monkeypox occurrence in animals in Hong Kong.

Starting from October 5, opportunistic vaccination will be provided to clients with high risk sexual practices at the DH's six Social Hygiene Service Clinics (SoCHS) (namely Wan Chai Male SoCHS, Wan Chai Female SoCHS, Yau Ma Tei Male SoCHS, Yung Fung Shee SoCHS, Fanling SoCHS and Tuen Mun SoCHS). Relevant clients can obtain further information from the respective

clinics. For details of the clinics, please refer to the following websites: www.dh.gov.hk/english/tele/tele_chc/tele_chc_shcf.html and www.dh.gov.hk/english/tele/tele_chc/tele_chc_shcm.html. Such service would also be provided to clients at the DH's Integrated Treatment Centre in Kowloon Bay and the Hospital Authority's (HA) Special Medical Clinics at Queen Elizabeth Hospital and Princess Margaret Hospital.

With regard to healthcare workers and laboratory personnel, the HA and the DH will provide vaccination for its respective staff at high risk of exposure earlier, starting from September 26 at HA staff clinics and selected DH clinics respectively.

For other high-risk target groups (including those who are not clients of the DH's SocHS), the DH has also set up two designated centres which are situated at 3/F, Yau Ma Tei Jockey Club Polyclinic, 145 Battery Street, Yau Ma Tei (operates from Monday to Sunday, 9am to 8pm), and 7/F, Tang Chi Ngong Specialist Clinic, 284 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai (evening from 5.30pm to 8pm from Monday to Friday except public holidays). Individuals under the high-risk target group(s) can make a booking by email (mpv_booking@dh.gov.hk) or by phone (2547 1900) from October 3 to receive monkeypox vaccination starting from October 5.

The Government has procured a third-generation vaccine by making reference to the earlier JSC recommendations. The first shipment of the third-generation vaccine (JYNNEOS) has arrived in Hong Kong and will be distributed for use in the Monkeypox Vaccination Programme. According to the recommendation by the JSC, a two-dose regime is required while those who have received smallpox vaccine will only need one dose. Based on the suggested administration method by the JSC and the current vaccine procurement, it is expected about 120 000 individuals can receive vaccination under the programme. The CHP appeals to members of the public who are under the high-risk target groups to get vaccinated as soon as possible.

Apart from launching the vaccination programme, the Government is well prepared to tackle monkeypox, including the reservation of the Sai Kung Outdoor Recreation Centre for the quarantine of close contacts of confirmed monkeypox cases, as well as other precautionary measures under the Plan. Members of the public, especially those subject to high risks of exposure, should take precautions and avoid close physical contact with persons or animals suspected of monkeypox infection.

[Measures to assist foreign domestic helpers and employers cope with](#)

COVID-19 pandemic extended

The Government today (September 21) announced that the measures to assist foreign domestic helpers (FDHs) and their employers cope with the COVID-19 pandemic will be extended.

Extension of validity period of existing contracts

The Government will continue to enable employers to extend the validity period of the existing contracts with their outgoing FDHs. For all FDH contracts that will expire on or before December 31, 2022, the Commissioner for Labour has given in-principle consent for extending the employment period stated in Clause 2 of the Standard Employment Contract for a maximum period of six months, on the basis that such variation is mutually agreed upon by both the employer and the FDH concerned. However, applications for further extension of contracts which have already been extended under the previously announced flexibility arrangements will not be considered.

If arrangements cannot be made for a newly hired FDH to come to Hong Kong within the above-mentioned six-month extended period, and the employer needs to continue to employ his/her FDH beyond the six-month extended period, the employer should consider applying for a contract renewal with the existing FDH.

Deferral of return to the place of origin

Under normal circumstances, an FDH on a renewed contract with the same employer, or due to start a new contract with a new employer upon the expiry of an existing contract, may apply to the Immigration Department (ImmD) for deferring his/her return to the place of origin for not more than one year after the existing contract ends, subject to the agreement of his/her current employer or new employer.

In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government will further extend the current flexibility arrangement. If an FDH is unable to return to his/her place of origin within the aforementioned one-year period, he/she may, upon agreement with the employer, apply to the ImmD for a further extension of the limit of stay until the end of his/her contract such that he/she may return to the place of origin within that period. Such applications are acceptable within eight weeks prior to the expiry of the existing limit of stay of the FDHs (i.e. same as those for contract renewal).

The Government reminds employers and FDHs that the above flexibility arrangement must be mutually agreed between them, and that the requirement of FDHs returning to their place of origin remains in force. Employers should arrange for their FDHs to return to their place of origin within the extended limit of stay.

The Government will continue to closely monitor the situation and review the above measures and flexibility arrangements as and when necessary.

To tie in with the disease prevention measures and reduce the flow of people, the Government appeals to members of the public to submit visa applications for FDHs and further employment of FDHs through online means, including through the ImmD mobile application. Through the electronic services for visa application and an "e-Visa" arrangement implemented by the ImmD, members of the public can complete the entire process of the visa application, including application submission, payment and "e-Visa" collection. They may also enquire about the application status and submit supplementary documents and notification of premature termination of an employment contract via a dedicated "Online Services for Foreign Domestic Helpers" webpage set up by the ImmD at www.immd.gov.hk/fdh. The whole process does not require them to visit an office of the ImmD in person to go through the formalities, which is both convenient and time-saving, while reducing the need to travel and contributing to the efforts to fight the virus together.

The Government also urges employers and their FDHs to be mindful of the limit of stay and the passport validity of the FDHs and arrange for applications for visas and replacement of passports in advance.

For enquiries on employment rights and benefits of FDHs, please contact the Labour Department (LD) at the dedicated FDH hotline at 2157 9537 (manned by 1823) or by email to fdh-enquiry@labour.gov.hk. The dedicated FDH portal (www.fdh.labour.gov.hk) set up by the LD also provides information and useful links relating to the employment of FDHs. For enquiries on FDH visa applications, please contact the ImmD by calling the enquiry hotline at 2824 6111 or by sending email to enquiry@immd.gov.hk.

36th batch of applications approved for trials of green innovative transport technologies under New Energy Transport Fund

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) today (September 21) announced its approval of the 36th batch of applications for the trials of green innovative transport technologies under the New Energy Transport Fund.

The 21 newly approved applications are for the trials of 27 electric light goods vehicles, two electric heavy goods vehicles and one single-deck electric bus, involving a total subsidy of about \$18.6 million. The applications are from:

Austin Agger Position Limited
China Recycling Co Limited
Corvette Engineering Company Limited
Crown Wine Cellars Limited
Crown Worldwide (HK) Limited
G.A.Y. Trading Limited
Guangdong Rainbow Tourist Transportation
Co., Limited
High Way Development and Trading Limited
Hong Kong Aircraft Engineering Company
Limited
KG Engineering Limited
Promise Transport & Logistic Co. Limited
Rich Union Engineering Limited
Scientific Gas Engineering Company
Limited
Sharp Company
Stand Rich Creation Limited
Suny Ching Engineering Company Limited
The Hong Kong and China Gas Company
Limited
Turbo Ice Company Limited
UPS Parcel Delivery Service Limited
Wholly Gain Limited

The latest approval brings the total number of trials being pursued under the Fund to 275, with the total subsidy amount of about \$230 million. At present, a total of 136 approved trials under the Fund have been completed. The EPD will upload the trial reports once completed to the Fund's website for public information.

The Government has put in place the Fund since March 2011 to subsidise the testing and encourage wider use of green innovative transport technologies for a variety of commercial transport tools including goods vehicles (including special purpose vehicles), taxis, light buses, buses, vessels, motorcycles, non-road vehicles (applicable to vehicle models approved by the Transport Department or the Airport Authority Hong Kong), or the aforesaid transport tools of charitable/non-profit making organisations providing services to their clients. The technologies to be subsidised include new energy vehicles or vessels, conversion of in-use conventional vehicles or vessels to new energy vehicles or vessels, and after-treatment emission reduction devices or fuel saving devices applicable to vehicles and vessels. Transport operators and charitable/non-profit making organisations may apply for trying out different green innovative technology products subject to a maximum subsidy of \$10 million for each application and a total of \$12 million for each applicant.

For more information on the Fund and the approved applications, please visit the website of the Fund (www.epd.gov.hk/epd/english/environmentinhk/air/prob_solutions/new-energy-transport-fund.html) or call the enquiry hotline on 2824 0022.