

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

The Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) today (January 7) announced that the department tested 111 water samples collected from cooling towers in 73 buildings in its routine inspections in December 2021. 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](http://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.

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## **Rates and Government rent due by January 31**

Demand notes for rates and/or Government rent for the quarter from January to March 2022 have been issued, and payment should be made by January 31, 2022.

The demand notes have reflected the rates concession for this quarter, subject to a ceiling of \$1,000 and \$2,000 for each rateable domestic and non-domestic tenement respectively. Any unused portion of the concession in this quarter will not be used to offset the outstanding rates in any other quarter. The concession does not apply to payment of Government rent.

Payment can be made:

(1) by using autopay or electronic means (such as PPS, bank automated teller machines (ATMs), the Faster Payment System (FPS) or the Internet);

(2) by uploading an e-Cheque/e-Cashier's Order via the Pay e-Cheque portal [www.payecheque.gov.hk](http://www.payecheque.gov.hk);

(3) by sending a crossed cheque to the Treasury, PO Box 28000, Gloucester Road Post Office, Hong Kong (please note that mail with underpaid postage will be rejected); or

(4) in person at any of the post offices or designated convenience stores. For the addresses and opening hours of post offices, please call Hongkong Post's hotline (2921 2222), or visit [www.hongkongpost.hk](http://www.hongkongpost.hk).

If demand notes have not been received, members of the public may call 2152 0111, fax 2152 0113, or visit the Rating and Valuation Department, 15/F, Cheung Sha Wan Government Offices, 303 Cheung Sha Wan Road, Kowloon.

Members of the public can also visit the department's website at [www.rvd.gov.hk](http://www.rvd.gov.hk) to obtain replacement demand notes or enquire as to the amount payable. For instant payment, payers may obtain a payment QR code or an FPS payment code from the Account Enquiries service at the website. Payers may present the payment QR code by using mobile devices (e.g. mobile phone or tablet) at any post office, 7-Eleven, Circle K or VanGo in Hong Kong or use any mobile banking app or e-wallet which supports Government FPS bill payments to scan the FPS payment code for payment.

A surcharge of 5 per cent will be imposed for late payment and a further surcharge of 10 per cent will be levied on the amount (including the 5 per cent surcharge) that remains unpaid six months after the payment deadline.

To support environmental protection, payers are advised to utilise the free eRVD Bill service to receive e-bills and make payments. They are also encouraged to settle bills by autopay or other means of e-payment (e.g. PPS, ATM, the Internet or e-Cheque/e-Cashier Order) in order to save queuing time. Application forms for autopay are obtainable from the Rating and Valuation Department, District Offices and major banks in Hong Kong or by telephoning 2152 0111. Payers may also download the form from the department's website.

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**[45th round of compulsory testing for staff members of RCHEs, RCHDs and](#)**

# nursing homes to commence shortly

The Government today (January 7) announced that the 45th round of compulsory testing for staff members of residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs), residential care homes for persons with disabilities (RCHDs) and nursing homes will commence shortly.

In accordance with section 10(1) of the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J), the Secretary for Food and Health issued a compulsory testing notice yesterday (January 6), requiring persons who are employed by and will be on duty at RCHEs, RCHDs, nursing homes and day service units attached to the premises of residential care homes during the period from January 19 to 25, 2022, or who will provide services to residents or users through hire-of-service contracts with residential care homes and the aforementioned units during that period (including full-time, part-time and relief staff), to undergo polymerase chain reaction-based nucleic acid tests for COVID-19 during the period from January 12 to 18, 2022, according to the requirements and procedure set out in the notice (the Specified Test). The samples must be collected by using combined nasal and throat swabs and must not be taken by the person to be tested. However, persons who have completed a COVID-19 vaccination course (i.e. received two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine at least 14 days before the end of the testing period) are not required to undergo the Specified Test. Persons who have completed a COVID-19 vaccination course in places outside Hong Kong (i.e. received the recommended dose(s) of a COVID-19 vaccine as stipulated in relevant guidelines at least 14 days before the end of the testing period, and the vaccine used is included on the list of vaccines recognised for specified purposes as published on [www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/list\\_of\\_recognised\\_covid19\\_vaccines.pdf](http://www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/list_of_recognised_covid19_vaccines.pdf)), are also not required to undergo the Specified Test.

The staff of the aforementioned institutions may choose the following means to undergo the Specified Test:

- (1) To undergo the Specified Test in any of the Community Testing Centres (see the list at [www.communitytest.gov.hk/en](http://www.communitytest.gov.hk/en)), Temporary Testing Centres (if any) (see the list at [www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/site\\_pubsvc/page\\_supportser/sub\\_ttc](http://www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/site_pubsvc/page_supportser/sub_ttc)), or mobile specimen collection stations (if any) (see the list at [www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html](http://www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html)) in accordance with the instructions given by the staff at the centre/station;
- (2) To have a sample collected by a healthcare professional or trained personnel as arranged by institution operators at a laboratory listed on the "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (see the list at [www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/List\\_of\\_recognised\\_laboratories\\_RTPCR.pdf](http://www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/List_of_recognised_laboratories_RTPCR.pdf)); or
- (3) To self-arrange testing provided by a laboratory listed on the "COVID-19 Thematic Website" at their own expense (see the list at

[www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/List\\_of\\_recognised\\_laboratories\\_RTPCR.pdf](http://www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/List_of_recognised_laboratories_RTPCR.pdf)) and the sample through a combined nasal and throat swab must not be taken by the person himself or herself.

Any person who fails to comply with the testing notice commits an offence and may be subject to a fixed penalty of \$5,000. He or she would also be issued with a compulsory testing order requiring him or her to undergo testing within a specified time frame. Failure to comply with the order is an offence and the offender would be liable to a fine at level 4 (\$25,000) and imprisonment for six months.

A spokesman for the Social Welfare Department (SWD) said that the SWD and the Department of Health would issue letters to institutions to inform them of the relevant arrangements and requirements. The spokesman reminded that staff of the said institutions who would undergo testing at community testing centres should make an advance booking via the community testing centre booking system ([www.communitytest.gov.hk](http://www.communitytest.gov.hk)) for the free testing service. In addition, institution operators should remind their staff members to properly keep the SMS notifications of their test results or their test result reports.

Institution operators are required to keep records of their staff having received the Specified Test and the results within the time frame specified by the Government. They are also required to keep the list of staff members who have completed a COVID-19 vaccination course. Institution operators also have to co-operate with Checking Officers (Compulsory Testing) of the SWD who are enforcing the Regulation at residential care homes.

The SWD spokesman said that starting from the 26th round of compulsory testing, staff members who have not been vaccinated and do not have medical certificates certifying that they are unfit to receive COVID-19 vaccination owing to health reasons have to undergo compulsory testing at their own expense. The Government will continue to monitor the epidemic situation and make adjustments to the aforementioned testing policy after taking the overall anti-epidemic measures into account. Although staff members who have completed a COVID-19 vaccination course are exempted from the regular compulsory testing, they can still receive free testing if they voluntarily choose to undergo the test for the time being.

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## **Burial and cremation services to be suspended on Lunar New Year's Day**

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) announced today (January 7) that services for the disposal of the dead will be suspended on Lunar New Year's Day (February 1).

An FEHD spokesman said, "All cemeteries and crematoria offices of the department will be closed on Lunar New Year's Day. No coffins will be accepted for burial at public cemeteries and no cremations will be undertaken at public crematoria.

"Cremation services and burial services will resume normal operation on February 2."

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## **Vacancy in North District Council**

The Government declared by notice in the Gazette today (January 7) the existence of a vacant elected seat in the North District Council Fanling Town Constituency.

Ms Wong Hoi-ying, an elected member of the North District Council Fanling Town Constituency, had been consecutively absent from all the meetings of the Council since August 31, 2021, without obtaining the consent of the Council before the end of the disqualifying period. Pursuant to section 24(5) of the District Councils Ordinance (Cap. 547) (the Ordinance), Ms Wong has been disqualified from holding office since January 1, 2022. Her office has become vacant since that day under section 26(c) of the Ordinance.