

Government tightens boarding and quarantine requirements for places with Omicron cases detected

The Government announced today (December 28) that in view of the latest global developments of the COVID-19 pandemic situation, Brunei Darussalam and Paraguay will be specified as Group A specified places from 0.00am on December 31 to tighten the boarding and quarantine requirements for relevant inbound travellers.

To manage and prevent the importation risks posed by Omicron cases, the Government will continue to employ the most stringent measures to guard against importation of cases. Overseas places where Omicron cases have been detected that may lead to local transmission and exportation of cases will be specified as Group A specified places. Noting that the detection of Omicron cases was confirmed in Brunei Darussalam and Paraguay, the Government will specify them as Group A specified places from 0.00am on December 31. Non-Hong Kong residents who have stayed there within 21 days will not be allowed to enter Hong Kong. Hong Kong residents can only board a flight for Hong Kong if they have been fully vaccinated and hold a recognised vaccination record. They will have to undergo compulsory quarantine in a designated quarantine hotel for 21 days upon returning to Hong Kong, with six tests to be conducted during quarantine, followed by compulsory testing in a community testing centre on the 26th day of arrival in Hong Kong.

Details on the relevant boarding and compulsory quarantine requirements for respective specified places can be found at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/inbound-travel.html.

The Government will gazette the relevant updated specifications under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Regulation of Cross-boundary Conveyances and Travellers) Regulation (Cap. 599H) to effect the above measures.

Government makes “restriction-testing declaration” and issues compulsory testing notice in respect of specified

“restricted area” in Tuen Mun

The Government today (December 28) exercised the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) to make a "restriction-testing declaration" (declaration) effective from 8.30pm, under which people (hereafter referred to as "persons subject to compulsory testing") within the specified "restricted area" in Tuen Mun (i.e. Tower 1, The SeaCrest, 1 Hang Kwai Street, Tuen Mun. See Annex) are required to stay in their premises and undergo compulsory testing. Persons subject to compulsory testing are required to stay in their premises until all such persons identified in the "restricted area" have undergone testing and the test results are mostly ascertained. The Government aims at finishing this exercise at about 7am tomorrow (December 29).

A Government spokesman said, "Under Cap. 599J, the Government can, according to the needs of infection control, make a 'restriction-testing declaration'. As a preliminary positive case who has lived in the abovementioned building was detected today, and the preliminary test result involved a mutant strain, the risk of infection in the relevant area is assessed to be likely higher, so the Government decided to make a 'restriction-testing declaration' for the relevant area after the test result was found to be positive."

The Government will set up temporary specimen collection stations at the "restricted area" and request persons subject to compulsory testing to undergo testing before 0.30am tomorrow. Arrangements will be made for persons subject to compulsory testing to undergo a nucleic acid test at specimen collection stations where dedicated staff will collect samples through combined nasal and throat swabs. Persons subject to compulsory testing must stay at their place of residence until all test results are ascertained to avoid cross-infection risk. The Government will arrange for door-to-door specimen collection for people with impaired mobility and elderly persons.

The Government spokesman said, "We understand that this exercise will cause inconvenience to the public. The Government has made arrangements to carry out testing for all persons present in the 'restricted area' as soon as possible. The aim is to strive to complete testing of all identified persons subject to compulsory testing and confirm the results, and finish the exercise at around 7am tomorrow. The Government will make a public announcement when the declaration expires officially. In the cases in which employees are unable to go to work because of the declaration, the Government hopes their employers can exercise discretion and not deduct the salaries or benefits of the employees."

If staying in the "restricted area" will cause unreasonable hardship to individuals who are not residents in the area when the declaration takes effect, government officers may exercise discretion and allow that person to leave the area after considering the individual circumstances. That person

must have followed the instructions to undergo testing and leave his/her personal information for contact purposes.

Persons in the "restricted area" who have undergone testing from December 26 to December 28, 2021, and are able to provide the SMS notification through a mobile phone or related certification containing the test results, are not required to take the test again. However, they are required to stay in their premises until all such persons identified in the area have undergone testing and the test results are mostly ascertained. Also, according to the compulsory testing notice to be issued today, any person who had been present at the above building for more than two hours from December 5 to December 28, 2021, even if they were not present in the "restricted area" at the time when the declaration took effect, must undergo compulsory testing on or before December 30, 2021. As a mutant strain is involved, for prudence's sake, vaccinated persons are also required to undergo testing.

In addition, in accordance with the latest arrangement, persons who resided in the same building as the confirmed local case carrying variant of concern suspected to be Omicron are required to undergo compulsory testing on the 2nd day, 3rd day, 4th day, 7th day, 12th day and 19th day counting from the day subsequent to that when the relevant confirmed case last stayed in that building before being admitted to hospital for treatment or leaving Hong Kong.

The Home Affairs Department has set up a hotline (Tel: 2835 1473) which starts operation at 8.30pm today for residents restricted by the declaration to make enquiries and seek assistance. The Social Welfare Department will also provide assistance to the affected persons.

The Government appeals to persons subject to compulsory testing for their full co-operation by registering and undergoing testing, and waiting for the results patiently at home. The Government will strictly follow up on whether the persons concerned have complied with the compulsory testing notices and "restriction-testing declaration". Any person who fails to comply with the compulsory testing notices commits an offence and may be fined a fixed penalty of \$5,000. The person 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 compulsory testing order or the "restriction-testing declaration" is an offence and the offender would be liable to a fine at level 4 (\$25,000) and imprisonment for six months.

[**Public hospitals daily update on**](#)

COVID-19 cases

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

As at 9am today (December 28), no COVID-19 confirmed patient was discharged from hospital in the last 24 hours. So far, a total of 12 189 patients with confirmed or probable infection have been discharged.

A total of 161 confirmed patients are currently hospitalised in the North Lantau Hospital Hong Kong Infection Control Centre and the Hospital Authority (HA) Infectious Disease Centre. Among those patients, one is in serious condition (case number: 12431) while the remainder are in stable condition.

The HA will maintain close contact with the Centre for Health Protection to monitor the latest developments and to inform the public and healthcare workers on the latest information in a timely manner.

CHP investigates six additional confirmed cases of COVID-19

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) announced that as of 0.00am, December 28, the CHP was investigating six additional confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), taking the number of cases to 12 605 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 12 604 confirmed cases and one probable case).

The newly reported cases are imported cases. Five of the cases involved mutant strains while the mutation test result of the remaining case is pending. The patients comprise six males, aged 16 to 61. Five of them arrived in Hong Kong from a Group A specified place (high-risk) with enhanced surveillance and one from a Group A specified place (high-risk). Two patients tested positive during the "test-and-hold" arrangement upon arrival at the Temporary Specimen Collection Centre (TSCC) at Hong Kong International Airport and one tested positive during quarantine. Case 12608 is a close contact of an imported case confirmed previously (case 12594) and tested positive at the Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre. The remaining two patients (case 12609 and 12610) are local air crew members. They underwent medical surveillance and regular compulsory testing in accordance with the relevant requirements for exempted persons and their samples collected at a community testing centre (CTC) tested positive for COVID-19.

The latest epidemiological investigation reveals that case 12609 tested negative in Hong Kong on December 17 and left Hong Kong on December 21 for

the United States (US) by flight CX844 and returned to Hong Kong on December 24 by flight CX841 from the US. His specimen collected upon arrival in the TSCC tested negative for COVID-19. His sample collected at a CTC on December 26 tested positive for COVID-19. He developed symptoms including headache, runny nose and cough on the same day. His Ct value was about 16 to 22. Case 12610 tested negative in Hong Kong on December 18 and 21 before his departure on December 23 by flight CX840 for the US. He returned to Hong Kong on December 25 by flight CX843 from the US. His specimen collected upon arrival in the TSCC tested negative for COVID-19. His sample collected at a CTC on December 27 tested positive for COVID-19. He is asymptomatic with a Ct value of about 31 to 33. The CHP has announced the cases' details last night (December 27) (www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/202112/27/P2021122700754.htm?fontSize=1).

Meanwhile, the CHP is investigating a preliminary positive imported case who had stayed in Hong Kong during the incubation period. The 44-year-old male patient is a local air crew member living at Tower 1, The SeaCrest, 1 Hang Kwai Street, Tuen Mun. He tested negative for COVID-19 in Hong Kong on December 14 and left Hong Kong on December 22 for the US. He returned to Hong Kong on December 25 by flight CX2807 from the US. His specimen collected upon arrival in the TSCC tested negative for COVID-19. The patient underwent medical surveillance and regular compulsory testing in accordance with the relevant requirements for exempted persons. His sample collected at a CTC yesterday tested preliminary positive for COVID-19. He is asymptomatic with a Ct value of less than 30 involving N501Y and T478K mutant strains. The CHP's epidemiological investigations revealed that the patient had contact at his residence with case 12609 on December 25. He received two doses of COVID-19 vaccination (Comirnaty) on May 29 and June 19 in Hong Kong.

As the above-mentioned three cases stayed in Hong Kong during the incubation periods, as a prudent measure, specified persons who were present at the relevant venues (including the places where the three cases resided and visited in Hong Kong during the incubation periods) at specified periods need to undergo compulsory testing on the specified dates.

A total of 108 cases have been reported in the past 14 days (December 14 to 27). One of them is an import-related case, while the rest are imported cases.

According to the testing and quarantine arrangements for local COVID-19 cases with mutant strains, the CHP reminded that persons who resided or worked within the same building as the residence of relevant cases will be subject to compulsory testing on specified dates in accordance with the announcement by the DH. They will also be required to undergo self-monitoring until the 21st day (see the details of the buildings and dates of testing at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/CTN_Specified_premises_and_Dates_of_Testing.pdf).

Specified persons in relation to the following specified premises are also reminded to undergo compulsory testing in accordance with the CTN tomorrow (December 29):

- Tower 2, Wing Fai Centre, 2-10 Luen Chit Street, Fanling
- 36B Tai Mei Tuk Village (except G/F), Tai Po
- Tower 3, The Visionary, 1 Ying Hong Street, Tung Chung
- Tower 7, Park Avenue, 18 Hoi Ting Road, Tai Kok Tsui

The CHP's epidemiological investigations and relevant contact tracing on the confirmed cases are ongoing. For case details and contact tracing information, please see the Annex or the "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk).

The spokesman for the CHP stressed, "The global situation of COVID-19 infection remains severe and there is a continuous increase in the number of cases involving mutant strains that carry higher transmissibility, and there are also reports of breakthrough infections in some vaccinated individuals. The CHP strongly urges members of the public to avoid all non-essential travel outside Hong Kong, in particular to specified places with high risk under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Regulation of Cross-boundary Conveyances and Travellers) Regulation (Cap. 599H)."

Government makes "restriction-testing declaration" and issues compulsory testing notice in respect of specified "restricted area" in Discovery Bay

The Government today (December 28) exercised the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) to make a "restriction-testing declaration" (declaration) effective from 7pm, under which people (hereafter referred to as "persons subject to compulsory testing") within the specified "restricted area" in Discovery Bay (i.e. Twilight Court, Peninsula Village, 2 Caperidge Drive, Discovery Bay, Lantau Island. See Annex) are required to stay in their premises and undergo compulsory testing. Persons subject to compulsory testing are required to stay in their premises until all such persons identified in the "restricted area" have undergone testing and the test results are mostly ascertained. The Government aims at finishing this exercise at about 6am tomorrow (December 29).

A Government spokesman said, "Under Cap. 599J, the Government can, according to the needs of infection control, make a 'restriction-testing declaration'. As a positive case who has lived in the abovementioned building was detected today, and the test result involved a mutant strain, the risk of infection in the relevant area is assessed to be likely higher, so the Government decided to make a 'restriction-testing declaration' for the

relevant area after the test result was found to be positive."

The Government will set up temporary specimen collection stations at the "restricted area" and request persons subject to compulsory testing to undergo testing before 1am tomorrow. Arrangements will be made for persons subject to compulsory testing to undergo a nucleic acid test at specimen collection stations where dedicated staff will collect samples through combined nasal and throat swabs. Persons subject to compulsory testing must stay at their place of residence until all test results are ascertained to avoid cross-infection risk. The Government will arrange for door-to-door specimen collection for people with impaired mobility and elderly persons.

The Government spokesman said, "We understand that this exercise will cause inconvenience to the public. The Government has made arrangements to carry out testing for all persons present in the 'restricted area' as soon as possible. The aim is to strive to complete testing of all identified persons subject to compulsory testing and confirm the results, and finish the exercise at around 6am tomorrow. The Government will make a public announcement when the declaration expires officially. In the cases in which employees are unable to go to work because of the declaration, the Government hopes their employers can exercise discretion and not deduct the salaries or benefits of the employees."

If staying in the "restricted area" will cause unreasonable hardship to individuals who are not residents in the area when the declaration takes effect, government officers may exercise discretion and allow that person to leave the area after considering the individual circumstances. That person must have followed the instructions to undergo testing and leave his/her personal information for contact purposes.

Persons in the "restricted area" who have undergone testing from December 26 to December 28, 2021, and are able to provide the SMS notification through a mobile phone or related certification containing the test results, are not required to take the test again. However, they are required to stay in their premises until all such persons identified in the area have undergone testing and the test results are mostly ascertained. Also, according to the compulsory testing notice to be issued today, any person who had been present at the above building for more than two hours from December 6 to December 28, 2021, even if they were not present in the "restricted area" at the time when the declaration took effect, must undergo compulsory testing on or before December 30, 2021. As a mutant strain is involved, for prudence's sake, vaccinated persons are also required to undergo testing.

In addition, in accordance with the latest arrangement, persons who resided in the same building as the confirmed local case carrying variant of concern suspected to be Omicron are required to undergo compulsory testing on the 2nd day, 3rd day, 4th day, 7th day, 12th day and 19th day counting from the day subsequent to that when the relevant confirmed case last stayed in that building before being admitted to hospital for treatment or leaving Hong Kong.

The Home Affairs Department has set up a hotline (Tel: 2835 1473) which starts operation at 7pm today for residents restricted by the declaration to make enquiries and seek assistance. The Social Welfare Department will also provide assistance to the affected persons.

The Government appeals to persons subject to compulsory testing for their full co-operation by registering and undergoing testing, and waiting for the results patiently at home. The Government will strictly follow up on whether the persons concerned have complied with the compulsory testing notices and "restriction-testing declaration". Any person who fails to comply with the compulsory testing notices commits an offence and may be fined a fixed penalty of \$5,000. The person 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 compulsory testing order or the "restriction-testing declaration" is an offence and the offender would be liable to a fine at level 4 (\$25,000) and imprisonment for six months.