

Update on cases of Legionnaires' disease

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (December 2) 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 November 24 to 30, two community-acquired LD cases were reported:

1. A male patient, aged 65 with good past health, who lives in Hin Yiu House, Hin Yiu Estate, Hin Wo Lane, Sha Tin;
2. A male patient, aged 62 with good past health, who lives in Hang Tat Building, 236 Tai Nan Street, Sham Shui Po.

"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 November 30 this year, 101 LD cases have been reported. In 2018 and 2017, there were 105 and 72 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 which 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.

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 micro-organisms. 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.

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.

Mainland pregnant woman jailed for making false representation

A Mainland woman was charged at the Sha Tin Magistrates' Courts with one count of making false representation to an immigration staff and sentenced to 14 months' imprisonment on November 27.

The 34-year-old defendant arrived in Hong Kong as a visitor and went to an Accident and Emergency Department for delivery without prior booking. Investigation revealed that the defendant was asked by an immigration staff member about her pregnancy status during arrival examination upon arrival at the Lo Wu Control Point and she claimed she was not pregnant. The defendant was subsequently charged with one count of making false representation to immigration staff on her pregnancy status. The defendant pleaded guilty to the charge and was sentenced to 14 months' imprisonment at the Sha Tin Magistrates' Court on November 27.

"Under the laws of Hong Kong, any person who makes false representation to an immigration officer commits an offence. Offenders are liable to prosecution and, upon conviction, subject to the maximum penalty of a fine of \$150,000 and imprisonment for 14 years," an Immigration Department spokesman said.

CAD's follow-up on operational situation of Hong Kong Airlines Limited

The Civil Aviation Department (CAD) has been monitoring the operational situation of the Hong Kong Airlines Limited (HKA) to ensure aviation safety and working closely with the Transport and Housing Bureau with regard to the follow-up actions on HKA. The CAD is concerned about the latest financial situation of HKA, including its inability to pay salaries to its entire staff in one go earlier. The CAD noted that in response to the financial situation of HKA, the Air Transport Licensing Authority (ATLA) decided to attach new conditions to HKA's licence, and ATLA also indicated that if HKA fails to improve its financial situation as required by ATLA by the deadline, ATLA will take further action under Regulation 15E of the Air Transport (Licensing of Air Services) Regulations (Cap. 448 Subsidiary Legislation A).

A CAD spokesman said today (December 2), "According to Article 6 of the Air Navigation (Hong Kong) Order 1995 (Cap. 448 Subsidiary Legislation C),

the CAD has to be satisfied that an Air Operator's Certificate (AOC) holder is competent, having regard to his equipment, organisation, staffing, maintenance and other arrangements, to secure the proper and safe operation of his aircraft registered in Hong Kong for the purpose of public transport. In view of the latest financial situation of HKA, including its inability to pay salaries to its entire staff in one go earlier, the CAD has great concern and has today requested HKA, which holds an AOC, to make representation on whether it is able to continue to operate stringently in accordance with the Air Navigation (Hong Kong) Order 1995. Depending on the representation, the CAD will take appropriate actions including but not limited to varying, suspending or revoking HKA's AOC according to Article 62 of the Air Navigation (Hong Kong) Order 1995."

In view of HKA's financial situation, the CAD has enhanced monitoring on the airline's flight operations and aviation safety since mid-December 2018. The CAD also actively inspects and audits HKA to ensure that its various aspects including equipment, organisation, staffing, maintenance and other arrangements comply with the standards of the above-mentioned laws and to secure its proper and safe operation in compliance with the conditions specified in its AOC. In the past year (from November 2018 to October 2019), the CAD has conducted about 180 scheduled and unscheduled checks on HKA.

The CAD will continue to closely monitor HKA's flight operations and aviation safety, with a view to ensuring that HKA's operations will continue to comply fully with the requirements of relevant aviation laws and regulations.

[Transport and Housing Bureau's follow-up on financial situation of Hong Kong Airlines Limited](#)

The Transport and Housing Bureau (THB) has been closely following up on the financial problems of Hong Kong Airlines Limited (HKA) over a long period of time. The THB, together with the Civil Aviation Department (CAD), summoned the management team of HKA again to a meeting on November 27, 2019, at which HKA reported on the latest financial position of the airline for assessment by the THB and the CAD. At the meeting, the THB expressed grave dissatisfaction and deep concern that HKA's financial situation had not significantly improved and urged the management team to resolve the financial problems pragmatically as a matter of urgency.

In fact, over a period of time the THB has been gradually scaling down HKA's operation in the hope that HKA's situation would be under better control. The THB has also reminded HKA to make timely notification to

affected passengers of the flight consolidations and to make appropriate arrangements for them in accordance with the terms and conditions of air tickets concerned.

The THB noted that the Air Transport Licensing Authority (ATLA) decided on December 2, 2019, to attach two new conditions to HKA's licence with effect from today (December 2). According to the new licence conditions attached by ATLA, HKA must, by a deadline, ensure cash injection at a level determined by ATLA (or provide an alternative to the satisfaction of ATLA), and raise and maintain its cash and cash equivalent level as stipulated by ATLA. If HKA fails to improve its financial situation as required by ATLA by the deadline, ATLA will take further actions under Regulation 15E of the Air Transport (Licensing of Air Services) Regulations (Cap. 448 Subsidiary Legislation A), which provides for revocation or suspension of licence.

The THB concurs with ATLA's decision and considers that HKA must face up to its problems seriously and use its best endeavours to meet ATLA's requirements by the deadline in order to prevent its situation from further deteriorating and to protect public interests. The THB has also reminded HKA that before any further decision of ATLA is made, it must continue to provide services to its passengers in accordance with the terms and conditions of air tickets concerned.

HKA is responsible for getting prepared for different operational circumstances, including unanticipated ones. The THB has reminded HKA of its obligations to provide services to passengers in accordance with the terms and conditions of air tickets and/or make other appropriate arrangements for them where necessary. As an employer, HKA should also take care of its employees' interests in accordance with the applicable laws.

[Air Transport Licensing Authority attaches new licence conditions to Hong Kong Airlines Limited](#)

The following is issued on behalf of the Air Transport Licensing Authority (ATLA):

In the light of the ongoing financial problems of Hong Kong Airlines Limited (HKA), ATLA has been closely monitoring the financial situation of the airline over a long period of time in accordance with Regulation 15D(1) of the Air Transport (Licensing of Air Services) Regulations (Cap. 448 Subsidiary Legislation A), and has repeatedly asked HKA to submit financial improvement plans. Since December 2018, ATLA has issued six press releases to inform the public of the financial problems of HKA and the follow-up work of

ATLA.

ATLA met the senior management members of HKA again on November 29, 2019, and heard the representation and explanations made by them about the latest financial position of HKA. Having considered the latest financial position of HKA, ATLA was of the view that HKA's financial position has deteriorated rapidly to such an extent that has severely impacted on HKA's capability in meeting its obligations as an employer to pay salary and the probability of providing a satisfactory service under its licence in respect of continuity and regularity of operation. ATLA found the situation extremely worrying. After careful deliberation, ATLA decided today (December 2) to attach new conditions to HKA's licence as per Regulation 15E (2)(b) of the Regulations that HKA should enhance its financial situation to such a level as already required by ATLA over a period of time.

A spokesman for ATLA said, "After careful consideration of the financial position of HKA at present, ATLA must take immediate and resolute action to prevent further deterioration of HKA's situation in order to protect public interests. In accordance with the two new licence conditions attached by ATLA, HKA must, by a deadline set, ensure cash injection at a level determined by ATLA (or provide an alternative to the satisfaction of ATLA), and raise and maintain its cash and cash equivalent level as stipulated by ATLA."

If HKA fails to improve its financial situation as required by ATLA by the deadline, ATLA will take further action under Regulation 15E of the Regulations, which provides for revocation or suspension of licence. ATLA would announce its decision by December 7, 2019.