

CE's Office response to media enquiries

In response to media enquiries on the wearing of surgical masks by officials, a spokesman from the Chief Executive's Office today (February 4) said the following:

Surgical masks are in short supply globally. Taking into account experts' advice in relation to the novel coronavirus infection, the Steering Committee cum Command Centre considers it necessary to prioritise the use of surgical masks, with priority accorded to healthcare workers and front-line staff. To this end, the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau issued internal guidelines to the heads of departments yesterday morning, stating that the top priority is to ensure the supply of surgical masks for workers in healthcare settings or when contact with patients is involved, and that departments should economise on the use of Government surgical masks as much as possible. In particular, heads of departments should ensure that those masks are only provided to staff members for use if (i) he/she will have frequent contact with members of the public as part of his/her duties (e.g. counter staff) or work in crowded places; or (ii) it is for meeting essential operational needs; or (iii) it is for meeting special needs of the staff members concerned (e.g. medical conditions).

The above-mentioned internal guidelines do not apply to civil servant colleagues who wear their own surgical masks. The Government has not requested colleagues not to wear surgical masks.

The Chief Executive has earlier reminded Principal Officials to lead by example, minimising the need to wear surgical masks unnecessarily in order to reduce their consumption. In practice, officials will take a risk-based approach and take into account relevant factors such as their personal condition, whether they have left Hong Kong or visited any hospitals recently in deciding whether to wear surgical masks at public functions. At the press conference yesterday, officials present decided whether to wear surgical masks according to their personal conditions. The Chief Executive wore a surgical mask while meeting petitioners this morning, taking into account the need to interact with members of the public in close proximity.