

CHP appeals to public to take precautionary measures against carbon monoxide and pesticide poisoning

Following the notification from the Hospital Authority yesterday (June 12) on two clusters of poisoning cases involving carbon monoxide and pesticide poisoning respectively, the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (June 13) appealed to members of the public to take relevant precautionary measures.

The cluster of carbon monoxide poisoning cases involved two males and one female aged between 45 and 60, who complained of nausea, dizziness, generalised weakness and loss of consciousness when a plumbing work on a blocked drain was carried out in a village house on June 11. They were sent to North District Hospital subsequently and were transferred to Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital (PYNEH) for treatment on the same day. The two male patients have been discharged after treatment while the female patient is still hospitalised but in stable condition. A preliminary investigation revealed that a fuel-driven machine was used indoor during the plumbing work by the two male patients and the area was not well-ventilated.

The cluster of pesticide poisoning cases involved three household members. They are a 30-year-old woman, a 16-year-old girl and a 14-year-old boy, who complained of nausea and vomiting on June 12 after being exposed to a pesticide at home since June 11. All of them attended Ruttonjee Hospital on June 12. The woman did not require admission but the children were transferred to PYNEH for treatment on the same day. They are in stable condition. A preliminary investigation revealed that the household had used a pesticide purchased outside Hong Kong at home and the active ingredients of the pesticide included aluminium phosphide.

The CHP has referred both clusters to relevant departments for follow-up.

The CHP said that carbon monoxide is a colourless, odourless and tasteless gas which is a by-product from incomplete combustion of any fuel which contains carbon. Exposure to a low concentration of carbon monoxide can lead to a range of symptoms such as dizziness, headache, tiredness and nausea; whereas exposure to a high concentration of carbon monoxide can lead to impaired vision, disturbed co-ordination, unconsciousness, brain damage or even death. The CHP reminded members of the public that fuel-driven tools should only be used properly in a well-ventilated area. People should seek medical attention immediately if suspected of developing symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Separately, aluminium phosphide can release phosphine gas upon contact with moisture or moist air. Inhalation of phosphine gas can cause symptoms

including nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, arrhythmia, hypotension, acute kidney injury etc. The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department advises members of the public to choose only registered pesticides with proper Chinese and English labels. Members of the public should always refer to the instructions on the labels and take necessary precautions when using registered pesticides. They should seek medical attention immediately if feeling unwell after using pesticides.