

COVID-19 compulsory testing arrangement for frontline staff of terminals and ship services sector

Following the announcement of strengthening the testing arrangement of high-risk and high-exposure groups by the Government earlier, a compulsory testing notice has been issued to specific frontline staff of the terminals and ship services sector to require them to undergo COVID-19 nucleic acid tests on a periodic basis pursuant to the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J).

From November 15 onwards, frontline staff of the Kwai Tsing Container Terminals (KTCTs), including stevedores or tally men, operations supervisors, reefer technicians, safety officers and gangway security officers, are required to undergo more frequent regular tests within 21 days after disembarkation from ocean-going cargo vessels (OGVs). Fully vaccinated staff have to undergo testing once every three days, while those not fully vaccinated are required to undergo testing daily.

Meanwhile, starting from November 22, compulsory testing arrangements will be imposed on frontline staff of the ship services sector, including harbour pilots, any frontline terminal staff, stevedores or tally men who need to board the ocean-going vessels arriving Hong Kong but other than those working in KTCTs, boarding clerks of shipping agents, technicians repairing instruments or machineries onboard, personnel conducting survey or audit onboard, as well as those engaged in crew change operations (including drivers and launch crews). They are required to undergo testing within 21 days after disembarkation from OGVs once every three days if they are fully vaccinated or daily if they have yet to be fully vaccinated.

To facilitate the abovementioned staff to undergo testing, in addition to existing testing stations at KTCTs and Hoi Kwai Road Public Transport Interchange in Tsuen Wan West, new testing stations will be set up at the open area adjacent to the Rumsey Street Car Park in Sheung Wan, near MTR Tuen Mun Station exit F1 and at public landing steps at Yau Ma Tei Typhoon Shelter from November 22.

A spokesman for the Transport and Housing Bureau said, "At present, over 90 per cent of cargo volume to Hong Kong are imported through sea. While attaching great importance to safeguarding public health and preventing imported cases, the Government has to ensure the smooth flow of global supply chain such that the provision of daily supplies and services for the public is unaffected. To this end, the Government has implemented various stringent control measures at the container ports with the full co-operation of the trade. As at end of October this year, 98 per cent of the frontline workers of the KTCTs were fully vaccinated."

The enhanced testing arrangement for the frontline staff of the terminals and ship services sector aims to better ensure the well-being of these staff under high risk and high exposure groups. The Government will continue to maintain close communication with the KTCTs operators and ship services companies to facilitate their staff to undergo compulsory COVID-19 testing.