

DH reminds public to observe isolation and quarantine requirements

The Department of Health (DH) today (August 22) reminded members of the public to combat the fifth wave of the epidemic and fight against the virus together by complying with isolation orders or quarantine orders respectively if they are cases who tested positive for COVID-19 or close contacts of cases. Members of the public should follow relevant requirements and the DH will stringently follow up on all non-compliant cases.

Since July 15, the Government has required confirmed cases to put on electronic wristbands during the home isolation period, with a view to ensuring compliance with the isolation requirement under the law that they must not leave their household area so as to further minimise the chance of community transmission. Confirmed cases who leave their household area during the home isolation period, do not put on the electronic wristbands, cut off the electronic wristbands or uninstall the "StayHomeSafe" mobile app are considered as violating the isolation orders, which is a criminal offence. Offenders are subject to a maximum fine of \$10,000 and imprisonment for six months.

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic, the Government has enacted a number of regulations under the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance (Cap. 599). For the cases handled by the DH, as of August 20, around 260 persons have been convicted by the courts for breaching regulations related to isolation or quarantine and have received sentences including immediate imprisonment for up to four months or a fine of up to \$15,000.

A spokesman for the DH stressed that the sentences have sent a clear message to the community that breaching relevant regulations is a criminal offence that the Government will not tolerate. In addition, currently over 600 suspected cases of violating isolation or quarantine related requirements are under investigation or follow-up, including over 140 suspected cases of violating isolation orders in relation to wearing of electronic wristbands. The DH will stringently follow up on all cases. Prosecutions will be considered based on investigation results and evidence.

Separately, the Government called on members of the public to follow compulsory testing directions and compulsory testing notices under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) by undergoing testing. Any person who fails to comply with the compulsory testing directions/compulsory testing notices commits an offence and the maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$25,000 and imprisonment for six months, while the fixed penalty for discharging the liability is \$10,000. The person may also be issued with a compulsory testing order requiring him or her to undergo testing within a specified time frame. Any person in breach of the compulsory testing order would be liable to a fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months. As of August 20, the DH had processed over 25 000 compulsory testing orders and over 7 000 fixed penalty

notices.

Apart from enforcing the above regulations, all relevant government departments will carry out enforcement actions proactively with regard to people entering specified premises and other relevant regulations, so as to ensure compliance with all anti-epidemic regulations. The spokesman reiterated that co-operation and support by members of the public play a critical role in the anti-epidemic work. They must strictly observe relevant requirements in order to fight the epidemic and minimise the risk of transmission in the community.