

Extension of opening hours of FEHD public columbaria during Ching Ming Festival

To prevent the spread of COVID-19, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) today (March 17) said that the opening hours of public columbaria under the FEHD will be extended to 7am to 7pm two weeks before and after the Ching Ming Festival (the period between March 21 to April 19) to lessen crowd conditions. The FEHD appealed to the public to avoid going grave sweeping during the peak period on the day of the Ching Ming Festival, and to stagger grave-sweeping activities over a wider period before and after the festival to reduce the risk of spreading the disease.

The FEHD also urged people visiting cemeteries and columbaria paying respect to ancestors during the festival to keep the environment clean and dispose of used containers properly to prevent mosquito breeding.

An FEHD spokesman said, "The FEHD will provide special cleaning services such as disinfection of handrails and lift buttons inside public cemeteries and columbaria during the festival period, and deploy more staff to clear undergrowth and remove rubbish, and empty bottles and containers left behind by grave sweepers. We will also remove water in containers and incense burners, and level the ground surface to prevent accumulation of water. Furthermore, additional litter bins and toilet facilities will be provided."

The spokesman urged the public to co-operate by clearing stagnant water and rubbish before leaving to prevent mosquito breeding. Containers such as lunch boxes, drink cans, plastic bags and buckets for burning incense should also be removed.

"As a precaution against mosquitoes, grave sweepers are advised to wear light-coloured long-sleeved tops and trousers, and apply insect repellent to exposed parts of their body," he said.

The FEHD has also advised managers of private cemeteries to take similar precautions against mosquitoes.

To protect the environment and to prevent hill fires, members of the public are encouraged to replace incense burning with flowers when paying tribute to their ancestors. Grave sweepers should take extra care when burning incense, which should only be carried out inside a designated joss paper furnace or iron bucket. They should make sure that all fires have gone out before leaving. Grave sweepers are also reminded to keep flammable items (for e.g. alcohol antiseptic sprays and alcohol-based instant hand sanitisers) away from fires.

The Government has been promoting green burials, and the FEHD has set up

the Internet Memorial Service webpage (www.memorial.gov.hk) and its mobile application for members of the public to pay tribute to their deceased beloved anywhere and anytime.

The spokesman also urged the public to pay attention to special traffic and transport arrangements which will be implemented during the Ching Ming Festival. Access to Cape Collinson Crematorium, Diamond Hill Crematorium, Fu Shan Crematorium, Kwai Chung Crematorium, Wo Hop Shek Crematorium and Wo Hop Shek Cemetery will be closed to all vehicles while the special traffic and transport arrangements are in operation, except for those with special permission.

For details of the special traffic and transport arrangements in the vicinity of cemeteries and crematoria during the Ching Ming Festival, please visit the Transport Department website (www.td.gov.hk).