

FEHD and Police continue to work together to step up inspections and take stringent enforcement actions relating to anti-epidemic measures (with photo)

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) and the Police commenced joint operations during Halloween and on its eve last night (October 30) and at small hours today (October 31) to step up inspections and take stringent enforcement actions at catering business premises including bars in Wan Chai District, Central and Western District, Yau Tsim District and Mong Kok District. Verbal warnings were given to the operators, practitioners and customers of the premises and leaflets were distributed at the initial stage of the operations to remind them to strictly comply with the relevant requirements under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F) (the Regulation), and to remind the public to comply with the various restrictions in relation to group gatherings and mask-wearing under the anti-epidemic regulations and directions when patronising restaurants. This will help keep the epidemic situation under control and reduce the risk of virus transmission in the community.

During the operations, the FEHD and the Police inspected 89 catering business premises (including bars). A total of 54 verbal warnings were given and different kinds of leaflets were distributed, while procedures on prosecution were initiated against six operators for segregation of tables less than stipulated distance and number of persons at one table in the premises exceeding the requirement stipulated in the Regulation. In addition, procedures on prosecution were initiated by the Police against two bar operators for maintaining dine-in operation during the period between 2am and 3am.

A spokesman for the FEHD said, "According to the latest directions issued by the Secretary for Food and Health in relation to catering business under the Regulation, food business operators and food handlers have to strictly comply with a series of requirements and restrictions. Among these, selling or supplying food or drink for consumption on the premises from 2am to 4.59am must cease; except for bars and pubs which are subject to separate requirement (see the fourth paragraph), any person within catering premises must wear a mask at any time except when the person is consuming food or drink therein; no more than four persons may be at one table at bars or pubs, while no more than six persons may be at one table in other catering premises; the total number of people allowed in catering business premises will be capped at 75 per cent of the normal seating capacity; tables must be arranged in a way to ensure there is a distance of at least 1.5m or some form

of partition which could serve as effective buffer between one table and another table; body temperature screening must be conducted before the person is allowed to enter the catering premises; and hand sanitisers must be provided."

The spokesman particularly emphasised that the new regulation requires any person within bars/pubs and night establishments/nightclubs must wear a mask at any time except when the person is consuming food or drink at the table therein.

If persons responsible for carrying on catering businesses and managers of scheduled premises contravene the Regulation, they are liable to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months. The FEHD and the Police may also take enforcement action under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Wearing of Mask) Regulation (Cap. 599I) against persons who fail to wear a mask in accordance with the requirements. Offenders are liable to a maximum fine at level 2 (\$5,000) or be issued with a fixed penalty notice (\$2,000). Persons who violate the group gathering restriction of Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition in Group Gathering) Regulation (Cap. 599G) are subject to a fixed penalty of \$2,000.

The spokesman said that the FEHD will continue to step up inspections at food business premises across the territory and conduct joint operations with the Police during Halloween to ensure that food business operators, food handlers and the public strictly comply with the directions under the regulations. Stringent enforcement actions will be taken to ensure compliance of relevant regulations, so as to avert the risk of rebound of COVID-19 infection cases. The enforcement actions on the Halloween Day will be more forceful than those on its eve.

The spokesman appealed to food business operators and practitioners to comply with relevant regulations on prevention and control of disease in a concerted and persistent manner, with a view to keeping their staff, customers and the public safe. Members of the public also have to comply with the related regulations and directions on group gatherings at catering premises.

