

FEHD calls on catering business operators to get well prepared for fifth wave of epidemic

The Government stated earlier that in the face of the challenges posed by mutant strains, the fifth wave of the epidemic may break out in Hong Kong anytime. A spokesman for the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) said today (August 13) that taking into account the risks of the virus spreading in catering premises, and especially the fact that customers do not put on masks most of the time in the premises, staff testing requirements for catering premises operating in Type B Mode of Operation have to be tightened. The FEHD has written to catering business operators to provide them with further information and call on them to make early preparations.

The FEHD spokesman said, "Pursuant to the prevailing directions and specifications under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F), all staff members of catering premises operating in Type B Mode of Operation are required to obtain SMS notifications containing their negative test results within 14 days from August 12 before they are allowed to work in the premises."

As regard to the new requirement of tightened testing to be effective at 0.00am on August 19, all staff members of catering premises operating in Type B Mode of Operation are required to obtain SMS notifications containing their negative test results before August 26 and before the end of every subsequent seven-day period before they are allowed to work in the premises. Staff members who have completed a vaccination course (i.e. having received all of the recommended dose(s) of a relevant COVID-19 vaccine at least 14 days before the end of the above period) will be deemed to have complied with the testing requirements and are not required to undergo regular testing.

On the other hand, catering premises must operate under Type A/B/C/D Mode of Operation under the "vaccine bubble". However, only staff members and customers of Type D premises have to be vaccinated in accordance with the requirements, which is a more effective way to prevent the spread of the virus. If the fifth wave of the epidemic breaks out in Hong Kong and there is a need to tighten the restrictions on dine-in services as one of the measures to stop the virus spreading in community, it is probable that only Type D premises will be allowed to provide dine-in services in the evening. Therefore, the FEHD appeals to the operators of catering businesses under Type A/B/C Mode of Operation to take precautions and encourage all staff members to receive vaccinations so that their premises can be changed to Type D Mode of Operation in a timely manner.

The spokesman reiterated that raising the vaccination rate is conducive to building an immune barrier for Hong Kong, thereby restoring normality to society sooner rather than later. The FEHD called on staff members of catering premises to get vaccinated as early as possible in support of the

"Early Vaccination for All" campaign proactively, with a view to protecting themselves and their families. Members of the public can learn more information on vaccines and make reservations on the designated website of the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme (www.covidvaccine.gov.hk).