

FEHD continues to arrange free COVID-19 testing services for targeted groups

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) announced today (September 25) that it will continue to arrange voluntary free COVID-19 testing services for targeted groups, including high-exposure groups such as frontline staff of catering businesses, staff of market stalls and licensed hawkers, to safeguard public health. Starting from tomorrow (September 26), restaurant operators, staff and personnel working in FEHD markets, hawker licensees could register through the FEHD website for the testing services. Stall tenants of other markets not operated by the FEHD (including those managed by the Hong Kong Housing Authority, the LINK and other private entities) do not need to make registration and the testing agency will contact them direct.

A spokesman for the FEHD said, "To broaden surveillance at the community level, and incorporate disease prevention and infection control into the new normal of the daily operation of society, the Government will integrate and regularise the Targeted Group Testing Scheme (TGTS) as part of sentinel surveillance. The TGTS will become part of the surveillance and early-warning system. By facilitating contact tracing and epidemiological investigations, it will be conducive to 'early identification, early isolation and early treatment', and can provide data for reference for the overall assessment of the epidemic situation."

To maintain the normal operation of critical services, the FEHD currently has been arranging testing regularly every week for those working in the Sheung Shui Slaughterhouse. Based on risk assessment, the FEHD will continue to provide voluntary free virus testing services for high-exposure groups, including the catering business staff group (licensed general restaurants, licensed light refreshment restaurants, licensed marine restaurants, licensed factory canteens, school canteens, staff canteens), staff and personnel working in FEHD markets, hawker licensees and registered assistants.

The spokesman said, "Operators of restaurants, FEHD market stalls, and hawker licensees can make registration at the FEHD website from September 26 to October 15. Stall tenants of other markets not operated by the FEHD (including those managed by the Hong Kong Housing Authority, the LINK or other private entities) do not need to make registration and the testing agency (Prenetics Limited) will contact them direct. The testing agency will provide the testing services from October 1. In the initial period (i.e. the long holidays starting October 1), bars/pubs and karaoke establishments that were closed pursuant to the directions made under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F) and restaurants that had been provided with specimen bottles by the Centre for Health Protection and hence did not need to be re-tested under

that scheme then would be the primary target to be reached out by the testing agency."

Under the scheme, the testing agency will be responsible for the provision of one-stop service covering specimen taking and testing. The testing agency will deliver specimen bottles to restaurants, market and hawker stalls for collecting deep throat saliva samples, and then collect the samples in the subsequent one to two days for testing. Person-in-charge of the premises should return all unused specimen bottles to the testing agency on the day of sample collection. The FEHD will work closely with the testing agency to determine priority of deploying staff to each premises set with reference to a risk-based approach and manpower resources available. Cases with preliminary positive results will be relayed to the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health for follow-up.

The FEHD strongly appeals to the groups concerned to actively participate in the testing scheme, and continue to comply with the directions made under Cap. 599F, and to maintain personal and environmental hygiene continuously with a view to ensuring cleanliness of the premises and food safety.

For details of the testing programme, please call the hotline of the testing agency (Prenetics Limited) at 3008 8319 or visit the FEHD website (www.fehd.gov.hk).