

FEHD continues to step up inspections and reminds catering business operators and public to comply with anti-epidemic regulations

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) and the Police conducted joint operations last night (November 28) to step up inspections at catering premises at Yuk Wah Crescent in Wong Tai Sin District and Kau Wah Keng in Kwai Tsing District, as well as stepping up inspections at catering premises in Yuen Long town centre on the night of November 27 till small hours of November 28, and reminded the catering business operators to strictly comply with the requirements and directions under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F) (the Regulation), and 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 catering premises.

During the operations, the FEHD and the Police inspected 51 catering premises. A total of 28 verbal warnings were given. The FEHD initiated procedures on prosecution against five catering business operators for breaching the requirements on the number of persons allowed at one table in the premises, distance or partition between tables and mask-wearing under the Regulation. The FEHD also initiated procedures on prosecution against two catering business operators at Yuk Wa Crescent in Wong Tai Sin District for violating the Food Business Regulation (Cap. 132X) (FBR) by extending business area illegally and on-street storage of food preparation utensils. The FEHD also issued fixed penalty notices to 15 persons in Yuen Long town centre for violating the requirement on group gatherings.

In addition, the FEHD also initiated procedures on prosecution against two barbeque site operators at Kau Wah Keng in Kwai Tsing District for violating the FBR by operating food business without a licence. Apart from arresting the concerned operators, a total of about 97 kilogrammes of barbeque food were also seized.

An FEHD spokesman said, "According to the current directions issued by the Secretary for Food and Health in relation to catering business under the Regulation, food business operators must strictly comply with a series of requirements and restrictions, including all bars or pubs, clubs or nightclubs must be closed; live performance and dancing must not be allowed in catering premises; dining-in must cease from 0.00am to 4.59am every day; no more than four persons may be at one table in catering premises; the total number of customers allowed in catering premises must not exceed 50 per cent of the normal seating capacity; a mask must be worn within the premises except when the person is consuming food or drink at a table therein; 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, etc."

The spokesman stressed that the FEHD will continue to proactively take stringent enforcement actions, step up inspections at catering premises across the territory and conduct joint operations with the Police if necessary, to ensure that catering business operators and the public strictly comply with relevant regulations. Enforcement actions will be taken against offenders so as to minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in food premises.

If catering business operators contravene the Regulation, they are liable to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months. Persons who violate the group gathering restriction of the Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition in Group Gathering) Regulation (Cap. 599G) or the mask-wearing requirement under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Wearing of Mask) Regulation (Cap. 599I) are subject to a fixed penalty of \$2,000.

In addition, the spokesman made the following appeals:

(1) the frontline staff of catering businesses should actively participate in the voluntary free Targeted Group Testing Scheme. The deadline for online registration has been extended to December 21. Restaurant operators may register through the FEHD's website before the deadline for the testing service. High-exposure groups who had already registered and undergone voluntary testing may register again. For details, please visit the FEHD's website (www.fehd.gov.hk/english/events/covid19_test/info_20200926.html); and

(2) with respect to the FEHD's announcement on November 16 to provide voluntary free testing services for cold stores staff, operators of licensed cold stores who have not yet accepted invitations from the testing agency (Prenetics Limited) should proactively participate in the scheme as early as possible for prudence sake.

The spokesman appealed to catering business operators 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 and mask-wearing at catering premises.