

FEHD continues to take stringent enforcement actions relating to anti-epidemic regulations during Lunar New Year holidays

A spokesman for the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) said today (February 4) that the FEHD continued to step up its inspections territory wide and conducted joint operations with the Police in multiple districts across the territory, so as to take stringent enforcement actions against operators, staff and customers of catering businesses and other premises in defiance of the anti-epidemic regulations during the Lunar New Year (LNY) holidays. The spokesman again reminded parties concerned to remain vigilant and 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). The FEHD will continue to conduct enforcement operations proactively, and urges premises operators not to defy the law.

In the operations over the past four days (January 31 to February 3), the FEHD and the Police inspected a total of 256 catering premises and seven other premises during the joint operations; and the FEHD on its own inspected a total of 1418 catering premises and 371 other premises. The FEHD initiated procedures on prosecution against operators of 35 catering premises suspected of breaching the requirements under the directions. Among the requirements suspected to have been breached, 15 related to mask-wearing, seven related to the distance or partition between tables, six related to ensuring scanning of "LeaveHomeSafe" venue QR code by customers, two related to display of notice concerning air change or air purifiers, one related to maximum number of persons allowed to be seated together at one table, one related to ensuring staff to comply with vaccination requirement, one related to both display of notice concerning air change or air purifiers and the distance or partition between tables, one related to both ensuring scanning of "LeaveHomeSafe" venue QR code by customers and ensuring air purifiers to be switched on and function properly; and one related to mask-wearing, display of notice concerning mode of operation and notice concerning air change or air purifiers. The FEHD also required these premises to take corresponding measures for reducing the risk of transmission. They had to, on the subsequent day of being identified of the irregularities by the enforcement officers, cease selling or supplying food or drink for consumption on the premises from 6pm to 4.59am of the subsequent day, and allow no more than two persons to be seated together at one table, ranging from three, seven to 14 days. In addition, the FEHD also issued fixed penalty tickets to two customers suspected of breaching the requirement of scanning "LeaveHomeSafe" venue QR code and one staff suspected of breaching the vaccination requirement. During the joint operations, the Police also took enforcement actions, including issuing fixed penalty notices.

If a person responsible for carrying on a catering business contravenes the Regulation, he or she is liable to prosecution and, upon conviction, to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months. Persons who are present at any premises of a catering business must comply with directions applicable to them. Non-compliance with the relevant directions would be an offence and offenders are subject to a maximum fine of \$10,000. The liability may be discharged by paying a fixed penalty of \$5,000. In addition, for customers in breach of the requirement on the maximum number of persons per table within catering premises, they are liable to a fixed penalty of \$5,000 for violating the Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation (Cap. 599G). For customers not wearing a mask when they are eating or drinking not at a table therein or they are not eating or drinking, they are liable to a fixed penalty of \$5,000 for contravening the Prevention and Control of Disease (Wearing of Mask) Regulation (Cap. 599I).

Separately, with the increased pedestrian flow at Flower Market, Mong Kok prior to the LNY, some shops placed goods on walkways and carriageways, impeding the flow of pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Apart from implementing crowd safety management measures and special traffic arrangements at the vicinity of Flower Market Road, the Government also stepped up inspections and enforcements to keep the passageways clear. From January 14 to 31, the FEHD issued 110 advisory letters to shop operators at Flower Market, appealing to them to exercise self-discipline and not to obstruct passageways. During the same period, 383 fixed penalty notices (FPNs), 32 summons and 74 verbal warnings were also issued by the FEHD against shops causing obstruction by placing articles in public places. Besides, 22 summonses were also issued against hawking in public place without licence and 14 Notices to Remove Obstruction were also issued against obstruction to scavenging operations. In the small hours of the LNY's Day (February 1) after shops at Flower Market were closed, the FEHD immediately arranged contractors to conduct large scale cleansing operation and collected around 100 tonnes of refuse and paraphernalia.

In addition, to combat illegal cooked food hawkers and avoid crowd gatherings, the FEHD and the Police stepped up patrol at the vicinity of Portland Street and Sai Yeung Choi Street South during the LNY and its eve (January 31 to February 3), and no illegal hawking activity was found.

Furthermore, to keep passageways clear, the FEHD and the Police also stepped up inspections and enforcements at the streets around Pei Ho Street Market area in Sham Shui Po. From January 24 to February 3, the FEHD issued 269 advisory letters to shop operators at the area, appealing to them to exercise self-discipline and not to obstruct passageways. During the same period, 73 FPNs and 152 verbal warnings were also issued by the FEHD against shops causing obstruction. Eight arrests and 17 seizures were made, as well as 119 summonses and 255 verbal warnings were also issued against hawking in public place without licence. 80 Notices to Remove Obstruction were also issued against obstruction to scavenging operations. FEHD contractors also conducted large scale cleansing operation and collected around 13 tonnes of refuse and paraphernalia .

Apart from stringent enforcement actions taken at the above locations

that are of community concern, the FEHD also conducted joint operations with several government departments over the LNY holidays at popular places in different districts where foreign domestic helpers (FDHs) commonly gather to carry out publicity and educational work, appealing to them to raise awareness of epidemic prevention and comply with the various anti-epidemic regulations and restrictions.

The FEHD, in collaboration with the Hong Kong Police Force, the Labour Department, relevant District Offices, and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, conducted joint operations over the past three days at various public places in Central and Western, Wan Chai, Yau Tsim, Mong Kok, Sham Shui Po, Tsuen Wan, Sha Tin and Sai Kung districts, near popular FDHs gathering places during public holidays. Apart from arranging for cleaning contractors to strengthen the street cleaning services at the relevant spots, the FEHD also stepped up patrols to combat unlicensed hawking activities. During the operation, FEHD officers seized cooking paraphernalia and around six kilograms of food (including cooked food). Promotional leaflets in multiple languages were also distributed by the FEHD to appeal to FDHs to maintain environmental hygiene and refrain from conducting unlicensed hawking activities. FDHs were also reminded by other government departments to comply with the regulations on mask wearing and the prohibition of group gatherings in public places.

To minimise the risk of COVID-19 transmission, the spokesman strongly appealed to all sectors of the community to stay vigilant and comply with the relevant regulations on prevention and control of disease in a concerted and persistent manner. The FEHD will continue to strengthen its publicity efforts and enforcement actions. All sectors are reminded to exercise self-discipline and co-operate to fight the virus together.



