

FEHD holds webinar to allay concerns of funeral business frontline staff on handling of dead bodies and actively follows up on coffin shortage

In addition to taking the lead to hold two webinars for the funeral business sectors in early March, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) organised the third webinar today (March 16), during which experts explained to frontline staff of the trade on medical information and responding to their enquiries, with a view to allaying their concerns on handling of dead bodies with COVID-19 infection. A total of over 50 organisations / individuals participating in the webinar. Separately, the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region has co-ordinated with relevant Mainland authorities regarding the quota on cross-boundary goods vehicle trips for supply of coffins to Hong Kong, thus assisting the trade in resolving their prevailing difficulties regarding coffin transportation via land.

In the first webinar in March, the FEHD has, in collaboration with representatives from the Centre for Health Protection, provided a refresher briefing for the funeral business on the Precautions for Handling and Disposal of Dead Bodies promulgated in 2020. At today's webinar, the FEHD invited Specialist in clinical microbiology and infection, Dr David Lung, to elaborate to frontline staff of the funeral business on the precautionary measures and reminders on handling of dead bodies, as well as answering queries from the trade on-site about risk management measures, support provided by hospitals, mortuaries and funeral parlours, personal protective equipment and operational processes that prevent infection of practitioners etc. Active responses were received from the participants. The video recording and the powerpoint slides of the webinar will be uploaded onto FEHD's webpage for reference.

On the other hand, the funeral trade and representatives from relevant government departments and organisations exchanged candid views last week on issues such as rationalising the workflow and shortening the time required for the handling of after-death arrangements. Earlier on, videos of the webinars have been uploaded onto the FEHD's webpage (www.fehd.gov.hk/english/cc/webinar_funeral_trade.html). In response to the views given by the trade, following proactive follow-up actions by the Hospital Authority and the Government, positive responses have been made in various segments of the process. The FEHD has presented the progress made and the measures proposed by the Hospital Authority, the Department of Health and the FEHD. The FEHD will set out the details in a written reply to be uploaded onto FEHD's webpage for reference. The FEHD will continue to co-ordinate different public organisations and the government departments with a view to assisting the funeral business sectors and bereaved families in the

early handling of after-death arrangements.

Local coffin suppliers have experienced difficulties in getting coffins delivered due to the epidemic on the two sides. After relaying this to relevant Mainland authorities by the Food and Health Bureau and the FEHD, 360 coffins have arrived Hong Kong smoothly via land and sea respectively over the past three days. It is expected that a new batch of around 730 coffins will also arrive by sea on Friday. At the same time, the Governments of the two sides have co-ordinated on the quota on cross-boundary goods vehicle trips for supply of coffins to Hong Kong, which is believed to be of help to the trade in their delivery of coffins. The FEHD expressed profound gratitude for the prompt response and support from the Mainland, and will maintain close liaison with the trade in providing all practical assistance when necessary.