

FEHD reminds catering business operators and managers of places of public entertainment to strictly comply with anti-epidemic regulation

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) reminded catering business operators and managers of places of public entertainment on February 18 to remain vigilant and strictly comply with the directions under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F) (the Regulation). The FEHD will step up inspections of catering premises and places of public entertainment, conduct joint operations with the Police as needed, and take stringent enforcement actions against offenders.

A spokesman for the FEHD said, "The Government relaxes social distancing measures in a gradual and orderly manner in accordance with the latest developments of the epidemic situation and risk assessments. According to the latest directions issued by the Secretary for Food and Health in relation to catering premises under the Regulation, from February 18 to March 3, if a person responsible for carrying on a catering business adopts a series of infection control measures, including the following two newly added measures, the premises can provide dine-in service until 9.59pm and no more than four persons may be seated together at one table."

The newly added measures are as follows:

(1) To ensure that customers scan the "LeaveHomeSafe" QR code or register their names, contact numbers and the dates and times of their visits before the persons are allowed to enter the premises, with records to be kept for 31 days; and

(2) To arrange for all staff involved in the operation of the premises to undergo a COVID-19 test once every 14 days starting from February 11, and ensure that the staff keep records of every SMS notification containing the result of the test for 31 days.

If a person responsible for carrying on a catering business does not adopt the two newly added measures listed above, the catering premises have to comply with the requirements of providing dine-in service until 5.59pm, no more than two persons may be seated together at one table, and putting up at the entrance of the catering premises a relevant notice (Please see the Annex for the notice template).

The spokesman also reminded all catering business operators that they must continue to comply with a series of requirements and restrictions, which include requirements that the total number of customers allowed in catering premises must not exceed 50 per cent of the normal seating capacity; the

number of people participating in a banquet in catering premises is limited to 20; no live performance and dancing is allowed; 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 1.5 metres or some form of partition which could serve as an 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. In addition, a person responsible for carrying on a catering business must display the poster containing the "LeaveHomeSafe" venue QR code at the entrance of the premises or at a conspicuous location.

If the requirements are not complied, the relevant premises must adopt relevant measures (selling or supplying food or drink for consumption on the premises of any catering business must be ceased from 6pm to 4.59am of the subsequent day, and no more than two persons may be seated together at one table) for a period of three, seven or 14 days, to reduce the transmission risks within the relevant premises.

The spokesman said, "Having considered that people do not have to take off their masks when ordering takeaway at catering premises, and the time of their stay is relatively shorter, it is acceptable for customers ordering takeaway meals (or food couriers in collection of takeaway) not to scan the 'LeaveHomeSafe' venue QR code. However, although the above is not a requirement under the directions, customers are encouraged to scan the 'LeaveHomeSafe' venue QR code in order to protect themselves, their families and friends and to help keep the epidemic under control."

The FEHD will also contact with cooked food stall tenants of its Cooked Food Centres or public markets and cooked food hawker licensees to notify them the specific measures applicable.

According to the latest directions, some of the scheduled premises such as places of public entertainment may be open when the relevant requirements and restrictions are fulfilled. Apart from complying with the restrictions and requirements on the maximum number of person at the venue, mask-wearing, body temperature screening, provision of hand sanitisers and social distancing, managers of places of public entertainment must also adopt the newly added infection control measures mentioned above.

Operators of catering premises and managers of places of public entertainment must arrange for all staff involved in the operation of the premises to undergo a COVID-19 test once every 14 days. The staff should keep the SMS notification on negative result for 31 days for checking by law enforcement officers. Staff of catering business and places of public entertainment may choose to get tested at the 19 Community Testing Centres, which will be free for them in the initial three-month period. The staff may also obtain a deep throat saliva specimen collection pack for free from any of the designated post offices, vending machines set up at 20 MTR stations or designated general outpatient clinics (GOPCs) of the Hospital Authority and return it to designated specimen collection points; or to visit any of the mobile specimen collection stations. For details, please refer to the

"COVID-19 Thematic Website (www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html).

In addition, starting from 9am on February 19, responsible persons of licensed general restaurants, licensed light refreshment restaurants, licensed marine restaurants, licensed factory canteens, staff canteens and school canteens may register via the FEHD webpage for the testing services provided by the FEHD's testing agency (Prenetics Limited) and register the number of catering premises staff (with the first four types of premises inputting the licence numbers and the latter two inputting the Business Registration Certificate numbers), and choose to collect the specimen bottles at one of the four designated locations at designated time slots:

Four tentative designated locations:

1. Hoi Chak Street, aside of Quarry Bay Park Phase II
2. Outside the entrance of the car park at shopping centre of Un Chau Estate, Sham Shui Po
3. Sheung Wo Che Road outside Shatin Government Offices, Sha Tin
4. Fung Cheung Road Public Light Bus Stop next to Fung Kam Street Sports Centre, Yuen Long

Starting from 9am on February 21 (Sunday), they may then collect the specimen bottles at the designated location at the designated time slot. The staff must return the specimen bottles to the testing agency in person at any of the above designated locations in the next one to two days for testing, and will receive the test result via SMS within the next one or two days if the result is found negative. Cases with preliminary positive results will be relayed immediately to the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health for follow-up. The staff have to register the relevant information online as indicated by the testing agency before returning the specimen bottles in order to receive the SMS. The daily quota for online registration is limited and online registration will cease when the quota has been fully used up. For details, please browse the FEHD webpage (www.fehd.gov.hk) or contact the hotline of the testing agency at 3008 8319 from 9am on February 19, onwards.

To achieve the target of making testing services available as far as possible for those who should be tested, the FEHD will continue to arrange free COVID-19 testing services for other targeted groups, including high-exposure groups such as staff and personnel working in non-cooked food stalls at markets, non-cooked food hawker licensees and practitioners of cold stores. The deadline for online registration for the scheme has been extended to February 28. People in high-exposure groups who have already registered and undergone testing may register again. Test result for these targeted groups will not be sent via SMS, while cases with preliminary positive results will be relayed immediately to the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health for follow-up.

The FEHD sent a letter on February 18 to catering business operators and

managers of places of public entertainment again to remind them to comply with the relevant regulations. It will be a criminal offence for contravening the abovementioned requirements. Offenders are subject to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months.

In addition, customers within catering premises in breach of the requirement on maximum number of persons seated together at one table are liable to a fixed penalty of \$5,000 for violating the Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation (Cap. 599G). Moreover, customers not wearing a mask when they are not eating or drinking at a table therein or they are not eating or drinking otherwise are liable to a fixed penalty of \$5,000 for contravening the Prevention and Control of Disease (Wearing of Mask) Regulation (Cap. 599I).

To minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19, the spokesman strongly appealed to catering business and scheduled premises operators to comply with the relevant Regulation on prevention and control of disease in a concerted and persistent manner. The spokesman also reminded operators concerned and the public to exercise self-discipline and co-operate to fight the virus together. The FEHD will step up inspections, and after publicity and education in the initial period, will take stringent enforcement actions at an appropriate stage.