

FEHD reminds catering business operators and public to continue to comply with anti-epidemic regulations

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) today (April 8) reminded catering business operators again 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). Members of the public should also strictly comply with the restrictions in relation to group gatherings and mask wearing to reduce the risk of virus transmission.

The FEHD continued to take stringent enforcement actions relating to anti-epidemic regulations during the Easter holidays. Inspections had been stepped up in various districts and joint operations with the Police had also been conducted. Stringent enforcement actions were taken against offenders. Consolidating the long holidays from April 2 to 6 as a whole, a total of 241 catering premises were inspected by the FEHD and the Police during the joint operations, and 2 175 catering premises and 496 other premises were inspected by the FEHD on its own. The FEHD initiated procedures on prosecution against 25 catering business operators suspected of breaching the requirements under the Regulation (among them, 15 were related to a failure 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 the remaining being related to the distance or partition between tables, mask wearing, and the failure to arrange all staff to undergo a COVID-19 test once every 14 days). Since the relevant requirements or restrictions were not adopted, starting from the subsequent day of being identified by the enforcement agent, corresponding measures for reducing the risk of transmission (i.e. selling or supplying food or drink for consumption on the premises 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) had to be taken by the premises for periods of three (three cases), seven (six cases) and 14 days (16 cases).

During the operations, the FEHD also initiated procedures on prosecution against an operator of a bathhouse which was not closed as required by the Regulation, and another person for operating food businesses without a licence.

According to the current directions issued by the Secretary for Food and Health in relation to catering premises under the Regulation, if a person responsible for carrying on a catering business adopts a series of infection control measures, the premises can provide dine-in service until 9.59pm and no more than four persons may be seated together at one table. Some of the scheduled premises including places of public entertainment may be open when the relevant requirements and restrictions are fulfilled. If a person responsible for carrying on a catering business or scheduled premises

contravenes the regulations under the Regulation, he or she is liable to prosecution and, upon conviction, 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), while 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).

The spokesman said, "Under section 31(1) of the Food Business Regulation (Cap. 132X), except with a licence granted, no person shall carry on any food businesses like food factories or restaurants etc. Offenders are liable to be prosecuted, and upon conviction, to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months, and, for a continuing offence, a fine of \$900 for each day."

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