

FEHD reminds dine-in catering premises to comply with requirements on improving air change or installing air purifiers as soon as possible (with photos/video)

A spokesman for the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) today (June 18) reminded dine-in catering premises operators that they must observe the requirements on air change or air purifiers to be complied with in dine-in catering premises under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F) (the Regulation), so as to protect the health of staff, customers and the public, and to fortify the public's confidence in patronising catering premises.

Under the Regulation, catering business operators are required to register with the FEHD that the air change per hour (ACH) at seating areas of their premises has reached at least six, or air purifiers that meet the specified specifications have been installed according to the on-the-ground situation, together with a certificate issued by a registered specialist contractor (ventilation works category). Catering premises must submit an application of extension to the FEHD if they are unable to complete the registration before the deadline.

Apart from 129 catering premises that have submitted online declarations before March 18 through the voluntary declaration scheme, as at June 16, 12 744 catering premises have submitted online registrations and among them, 9 818 have been collated by the FEHD. Of the total figure of 12 873, 1 644 premises have registered that they have met the requirement of having a minimum of six ACH, 11 024 premises have registered that they have installed air purifiers, and 205 premises have registered that they have met the requirement of having a minimum of six ACH and have installed air purifiers at the same time.

As at June 16, a total of 3 808 valid extension applications have been received by the FEHD. The FEHD is issuing letters to catering premises operators whose extension applications have been approved, reminding them to comply with the relevant requirements by the extended deadline.

The spokesman said, "Earlier on, the FEHD has issued letters to catering premises operators who did not apply for an extension of time, reminding them to take follow-up actions by the specified date, or else they may be prosecuted. The FEHD is stepping up inspections and taking stringent enforcement actions against catering premises violating the requirements under the Regulation."

On the other hand, the Working Group, established for the smooth implementation of the relevant requirements, together with relevant government departments have been proactively in continuous close communication and co-operation with different stakeholders including catering business operators and ventilation works contractors, and are committed to assisting them to implement the requirement as soon as possible. The thematic webpage set up by the FEHD provides one-stop relevant information, apart from the list of air purifiers that meet the specified specifications (a total of 452 air purifiers have been included in the uploaded information so far). It also includes information of Specialist Contractors (sub-register of ventilation works category), a Guide on Compliance with the Requirement on Air Change/Air Purifiers in Seating Areas of Dine-in Catering Premises, frequently asked questions, videos of useful information and a webinar, for reference by catering premises operators and ventilation works contractors.

The Working Group and relevant government departments have conducted numerous site visits, and visited different catering premises (including a Chinese restaurant, a dessert shop, a hotel Chinese restaurant and a dining club) again in late May to learn more about their experiences of successful registrations and the difficulties encountered. The video and photos of the visit have been uploaded to the thematic website.

The spokesman stressed that increasing indoor air changes to reduce infection risk has been promoted by many international professional institutions in the public health, engineering and building sectors, as well as in the roadmap to improve and ensure good indoor ventilation in the context of COVID-19 (www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240021280) published by the World Health Organization in March this year, and the indoor ventilation guidelines (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/ventilation.html) updated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of the United States in June this year. Their suggestions also highlighted that when the air dilution option is not possible, the air filtration or germicide option may be pursued as the alternative. The contents are also applicable to catering premises.

The spokesman strongly appealed to catering business operators and the public to fight the virus together, and strictly comply with the relevant regulations on prevention and control of disease in a persistent manner during, as well as before and after Father's Day, to protect personal and public health.

