

FEHD reminds food business operators and food handlers again to continue adopting anti-epidemic precautionary measures

In view of the latest development of COVID-19, and that food handlers were involved in local confirmed cases, food business operators and food handlers should attach importance to personal, food and environmental hygiene, so as to reduce the risk of spreading diseases. The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) today (July 10) reminded food business operators and food handlers again to 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 at food premises and take stringent enforcement actions against offenders.

A spokesman for the FEHD said, "To minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in food premises, the food business operators and food handlers must comply with relevant regulations on prevention and control of disease and to take further appropriate measures as recommended by the FEHD, with a view to maintaining high standards of hygiene and cleanliness. The FEHD has facilitated the trade to master the relevant information through advisory letters, and will step up inspections and enforcement actions to ensure compliance with the Regulation. "

In view of the development of the epidemic situation, the Secretary for Food and Health has issued the latest directions in relation to catering business premises. Starting from tomorrow (July 11), the number of customers at any catering premises at any one time must not exceed 60% of the normal seating capacity of the premises; no more than eight persons should be seated together at one table; while no more than four persons should be seated together at one table in bars and pubs.

Further to issuing the recommendations to food business operators and food handlers in writing on July 6, the FEHD today sent letters to them again and reminded them to comply with the relevant regulations and adopt anti-epidemic precautionary measures. Emphasis was put on following measures in those letters:

- (1) Table sharing should be avoided in food premises;
- (2) Food handlers shall wear face masks when working;
- (3) Trays, in particular the rim of trays, must be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected every time after used by customers. If tray lining is used, it shall also be replaced every time after use;
- (4) Equipment for serving food or drink should not be used for collecting used eating utensils and food residues. Equipment in different colours or

attached with labels should be considered for the purpose of signifying the different purposes involved;

(5) Door knobs, tabletops and seats shall be cleansed and disinfected regularly. After each batch of customers left, tabletop area including partitions should be cleansed and disinfected before the next batch of customers are seated;

(6) Food handlers should suspend from engaging in any food handling work and seek medical advice promptly, when suffering or suspected to be suffering from an infectious disease or having symptoms of illness;

(7) Food handlers should practise good personal hygiene (e.g. washing hands before or after handling food, after clean-up is carried out, after handling refuse or other dirty items, and after visiting the toilet). Food handlers should wash hands with liquid soap and water, and rub for at least 20 seconds;

(8) Food handling and scullery shall be carried out in food rooms (including kitchens and scullery rooms) but not at any open space; and

(9) Refuse and food residues shall be stored at refuse bins with close-fitting lids and properly disposed.

The directions currently in force include: tables must be arranged in a way to ensure there is a distance of at least 1.5 m or some form of partition which could serve as effective buffer between one table and another table; a person must wear a face mask except when eating or drinking; body temperature screening must be conducted before the person is allowed to enter the catering premises; and hand sanitisers must be provided for any person at the premises, etc.

The spokesman strongly appealed to food business operators and food handlers to comply with the requirements and directions under the Regulation. 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. Food business operators and food handlers are also required to keep environmental hygiene continuously to ensure cleanliness of the premises and food safety.