

FEHD reminds operators of catering business and scheduled premises to observe latest social distancing measures

A spokesman for the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) said today (January 6) that the Government announced yesterday (January 5) it will tighten social distancing measures in view of the development of the COVID-19 epidemic situation in Hong Kong. The latest specifications and directions to be issued by the Secretary for Food and Health in relation to catering business and scheduled premises under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F) will be effective from tomorrow (January 7) for a period of 14 days to January 20. The spokesman appealed to operators of catering business and scheduled premises to observe the relevant arrangements and strictly comply with various requirements and directions under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F) at all times. Customers patronising catering premises are also required to comply with the various anti-epidemic regulations and restrictions, including the requirements on group gatherings and wearing of masks.

For catering business, from 6pm to 4.59am of the subsequent day, a person responsible for carrying on a catering business must cease selling or supplying food or drink for consumption on the premises of the business, and close any premises, or part of the premises (whichever is applicable), on which food or drink is sold or supplied by the business for consumption on the premises. The premises concerned may still sell or supply food and/or drink for takeaway services and deliveries. A person responsible for carrying on a catering business is also required to put up a notice at the entrance to the catering premises to remind customers that food or drink should not be consumed in areas adjacent to the catering premises. The maximum number of persons per table for catering premises under Types B, C and D Modes of Operation will be reduced to two, four and six respectively, whereas the maximum number of customers per premises and per banquet will remain unchanged.

In addition, under the directions, no live performance and dancing activity will be allowed for catering business. Karaoke or mahjong-tin kau activity should also be suspended therein. Other requirements and restrictions on catering premises will remain in force, including that all customers, when they are away from the table, must not consume food or drink and must wear a mask; all customers must scan the "LeaveHomeSafe" (LHS) venue QR code using the LHS mobile application on their mobile phones/other mobile devices before entering the premises (excluding persons who only order takeaway); 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.

Bars or pubs must be closed. Scheduled premises, including bathhouses, places of public entertainment, clubs or nightclubs, karaoke establishments and swimming pools, must suspend operation.

The spokesman said, "If a person responsible for carrying on a catering business or a scheduled premises contravenes the regulation under Cap. 599F, he or she is liable to being prosecuted and, upon conviction, to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months."

For customers in breach of the requirement on the maximum number of persons per table within catering premises, such group gathering commits an offence under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation (Cap. 599G) section 3(1)(b) and they are liable to a fixed penalty of \$5,000 for contravening Cap. 599G.

Moreover, the spokesman stressed that as stipulated in section 5A(4) of the Prevention and Control of Disease (Wearing of Mask) Regulation (Cap. 599I), eating or drinking at catering premises not in compliance with the requirements under Cap. 599F is not regarded as a reasonable excuse for not wearing a mask. Therefore, within catering premises, for customers not wearing a mask when they are not eating or drinking at a table therein or when they are not eating or drinking, they are liable to a fixed penalty of \$5,000 for contravening section 5A(1) of Cap. 599I.

The spokesman said the FEHD will issue letters to operators of premises holding licenses issued by the department (including catering business and the above-mentioned scheduled premises), reminding them to strictly comply with the various anti-epidemic regulations and restrictions. In addition, the FEHD will step up inspections and law enforcement, and conduct joint operations with the Police as needed, to take stringent enforcement action against offenders.

To tackle the public health threat posed by the mutant strains, the spokesman again reminded operators of catering businesses and scheduled premises to remain vigilant and continue to comply with the relevant regulations on prevention and control of disease in a concerted and persistent manner, with a view to keeping their staff, customers and the public safe. Members of the public also have to comply with the related regulations and directions on group gatherings and mask wearing at catering premises.